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Lilith

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from the editor

When my son, my first child, was two weeks old, I took him for his first walk in his little collapsible carriage. As soon as I started to move along the sidewalk, my hands on the bar of the buggy, a rush of familiar sensation came over me; I knew in my body, in my hands, how this all felt. I had pushed my baby-sized doll along concrete sidewalks in a carriage not unlike Benjamin's about 20 years earlier. The physical sensation was so much the same, in fact, that I was actually startled to hear a cry coming from this carriage—my doll had never uttered a peep! What a paradigm for how some early experiences can prepare us (though incompletely) for adult roles. As girls, many of us played with dolls, rehearsing the role of nurturing the young. Even my mother pushed baby dolls in miniature carriages (that's her in the photo, circa 1915).

But nobody ever provided us with Grandma dolls so that we could practice pushing them around in toy wheelchairs. We don't have much opportunity to rehearse the role of caring for our elders. When I first put my hands on the handles of my mother's wheelchair, ten years ago, and began pushing her around her nursing home, the sensation was frighteningly new, not at all familiar.

Eldercare responsibilities often spring upon us suddenly: for the direct care of aging relatives, making decisions with them and for them, being their advocates in the doctor's office, the nursing home or the legislature. One minute you're just an adult daughter. Then Mom falls and breaks her hip, and suddenly you're a caregiver.

Dolls prepare us for childcare. *Nothing* prepares us for eldercare.

What happens in the lives of women who wake up one day to find themselves thrust into these new roles? Whether daughter or wife, daughter-in-law, granddaughter or friend, complex negotiations follow: with siblings over a parent's care; with grown, midlife children over how to care for an aging or ailing spouse; with faceless telephone contacts called on to help you through the peculiar agonies of long-distance caregiving, one of the fallouts of living in a highly mobile society where almost no one lives in the town where she grew up.

Aging affects women much more so than men—both as the elderly and as their caregivers. Old age, we're told, is a country of women.

"I Don't Want to Be a Burden," is our working title for LILITH's year-long focus on issues in caregiving for Jewish women. We plan to explore the impact of shifting emotional, financial and physical costs of caregiving in a population that is graying faster than any other in the United States. We're interested in going beyond these facts to examine the psychological and other subtle issues that come into play when family members, women especially, begin to self-identify as caregivers, often in unanticipated ways and at unpredictable moments. That's why, in launching the project in this issue, we bring you two distinct narratives: One is from a writer who traveled across the world every summer to help care for her nonagenarian father in Israel and now painfully computes the emotional toll of these Herculean efforts. The other comes from a European-born psychotherapist in upstate New York who evolved from caregiver to her ailing husband when she was in her mid-60s to a self-described "old" woman of 75 worrying about how her adult children will care for her.

Over the next several months, we will expand LILITH's Talent Bank, directed by Managing Editor Naomi Danis, to include experts on all areas of senior care, including policy makers, service providers, mental health professionals and educators creating "caregiver education" programs. We'll follow new legislative initiatives for supporting family or "informal" caregivers. And we'll check in with programs being developed in synagogues and schools to reach out to the whole cohort of healthy seniors who have until now been largely ignored by the organized Jewish community. Most Jewish marketing has been geared to drawing in the young: "young professionals," "young families." Can we expect synagogues and other institutions to focus on the "gray" market, both as a group in need of services and as potential volunteers and funders of Jewish activities?

Spotlighting eldercare issues fits into LILITH's overall mission to uncover not only the factual underpinnings of important social issues but their personal components as well. We will amplify not only the voices of the caregivers, but of older women themselves. With luck, we'll all be older someday. And will those responsible for our care when we ourselves are old remember whether we like bingo and basket weaving or Scrabble and Scriabin (or all four)? Now is the time to assess what kind of care we'd like to get ourselves, and the communication we'd like to have with our own caregivers, and then transfer some of that knowledge, empathically, into our relationships with older people today.

Some things to consider:

- People are living longer now than ever before; fully one-fifth of the Jewish population in the United States is now over 60, the majority of them women. This large population of older adults is unprecedented, and thus there are no real role models for how to meet complex intergenerational needs even as the caregivers themselves begin to feel their age. Caregivers need

models, and they need guidance; we've all been children before, but none of us has ever been any older than we are today.

- Middle-aged adults live farther away from their birth families than ever before. And Jewish adults tend to live much farther away from their own families of origin than members of many other ethnic groups in America (though they do have higher phone bills).
- Because of these great distances, children often have little opportunity to interact with their own aging relatives. Just as adult children need help to prepare for the emotional and physical tasks of caring for parents, youngsters need both instruction and models for how to relate across the generations.
- What if you're taking care of your partner? How can caregivers respond to the excruciating emotional and physical toll when one spouse is well and strong and the other is in need of chronic care? The sometimes harrowing stories of women who cover up for a spouse who is deteriorating constitute another chapter in the secret afflictions of those who are caregivers, because while there seems to be no shame in assisting an aging parent, spousal care triggers its own set of emotional problems.

Boomers (many now in their 50s themselves) constitute a generation that, according to one large poll, believes they can be successful at anything they set out to do. But there is no instruction manual for negotiating these concerns around intimate care. This is a generation that planned carefully for college—for themselves and their children—but made no plans for how to assume responsibilities for the older generation. Yet Boomers too are fated to become part of what The New York Times names "the silent volunteer army" who care for sick and aging friends and relatives at home. Perhaps because of the huge numbers of these Baby Boomers, Congress is now considering legislation to give tax credits to people providing this care.

LILITH has been awarded a grant by the Grotta Foundation for Senior Care to examine the experiences and the implications of the role of "informal" caregiver. Starting with the pages of this issue, watch for original analysis of the social issues and first-person accounts (those teachable life stories). And so that others can learn from what you have gone through, please, if you've had experience as caregiver to a friend or relative of an older person, tell us what you know—either from first-hand experience in making choices about someone's care, or from discovering programs that work in your own community.

"Chance favors the prepared mind," declared Louis Pasteur. By thinking through what will likely be a part of every family's experience now that fewer and fewer people are placing the elderly into nursing homes, the middle generation, sandwiched, will be have an opportunity to make necessary arrangements financially, physically, professionally and certainly emotionally before assuming caregiving responsibilities. This issue of LILITH is a piece of necessary equipment for that caregiver's survival kit.

Susan

—Susan Weidman Schneider

In the Garden of Eden, long before the eating of the apple... The Holy One created the first human beings—a man, Adam, and a woman, Lilith. Lilith said, "We are equal because we are created from the same earth."

—from The Alphabet of Ben Sira, 23a-b

Lilith

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"The Voices of Women." Traditionally, the voice of the Jewish woman was not to be heard in public, lest it arouse men. No more. These pages are for news about Jewish women, in our own strong voices.

Jennifer Fox on Love, American Style

What makes a relationship fail? What makes it last when all odds are against it? These were two of the driving questions that impelled filmmaker Jennifer Fox to make the 10-part landmark television series, "An American Love Story," an in-depth look at the daily life of an interracial family that began airing on PBS in September 1999.

Fox fell in love with an African-American musician when she was in her early 30s and was "genuinely shocked when the world of race in America just closed up around us. And I thought, 'Where have I been? What naïve world have I been living in?'"

That relationship ended, but Fox's desire to understand it remained. Her quest led her to Karen Wilson, a white corporate manager, and Bill Sims, an African-American blues musician, who have been together over 30 years. For more than five years Fox, an award-winner for her documentary "Beirut: The Last Home Movie," interviewed the couple, their parents and their two daughters Cicily and Chaney. Fox and a small film crew even moved in with the family in their Queens, NY, home for a year and a half.

Fox filmed their most personal moments, from Karen's decision to have a hysterectomy to Cicily's return from a semester abroad in Nigeria, where she experienced 'reverse racism' (being harassed for not being "black enough"). Pre-adolescent Chaney finds her first boyfriend on film, and learns to handle her attraction while dealing with her father's protectiveness. Karen and Bill attend Karen's 25th high school reunion, where the couple confront some of the same people who tormented them when their relationship began.

Even today, old taboos still exist in this country, where as recently as 1967, miscegenation laws outlawed marriage between African Americans and whites in 15 states. What enabled Fox, raised in an upper-middle-class Philadelphia suburb, to throw aside these taboos?

Fox attributes this in part to her unusual background. As a child, she commuted across town to a predominantly African-American neighborhood, where she attended a Quaker school and developed close friendships with some of the school's few African-American students. For Fox, these friendships created an enduring interest in African-American life. Fox also became involved in her synagogue's youth group and spent six months in Israel.

JONATHAN LEVINE

Filmmaker Jennifer Fox

LAWRENCE IVEY

Caught on Camera: The Wilson/Sims Family

Her experience as a Jew sensitized Fox to the experience of being the 'other.' "It was quite surprising to me to realize that, as I finished this project, I don't identify with the white majority. Being a Jewish woman is not the same as being a white woman," she says. Jews' "experience of prejudice" may give them "more compassion for peop who are oppressed. Pain stretches the heart wider in some ways."

And yet, Fox is quick to point out, others still perceiv her as white. "Jews can integrate and become invisible. Blacks can never do that," she says. When she was dating her African-American boyfriend, she saw first hand that America is "a police nation for those people who live in black skin."

In the film, Sims' return t his Ohio hometown after his son is arrested on drug charges takes us fully into this experience. He revisits the streets of his childhood i a now-disintegrated community. Many of his family and old friends now either work at the nearby prison or have served time there—a fate he narrowly escaped.

Still, for all the complications mixed-race couples experience, Fox believes the also have the opportunity: "They acknowledge something that people don't [usually] acknowledge—that the other person is different from them, even if they are the same race."

"The thing I've come to realize on this project is that human nature is afraid of difference, whether that be a Jew or a black person....If we acknowledge that, and try to be mindful, I think we could make progress. But there is no cure for racism or prejudice; there is just daily, conscious efforts by individuals." —*Liz Leshin*

Listen Up! Jewish And Feminist Themes on NPR

Ellen Kushner, host of NPR's "Sound and Spirit"

Recently, Ellen Kushner, host of National Public Radio's "Sound and Spirit," received a letter from a longtime fan: "I just wanted you to know that I am a man. You probably think that most listeners of your show are female, but I love your show."

The show, which is broadcast every Sunday night out of Boston, seeks to explore religion through music. Though the breakdown of "Sound and Spirit" listeners is about half male and half female, that demographic doesn't stop Kushner from putting a feminist, or at least a female, spin on her material. The general assumption in broadcasting, she comments, is that listeners are male, but Kushner assumes the opposite. For example, when Kushner asks listeners to imagine themselves in a particular situation, she includes bustling skirts in the imagery. When referring to a biblical author, she uses male and female pronouns interchangeably. She talks about religious taboos such as gay marriage.

"People always tell me that they like it," she remarks, "but if they don't—they can turn off the radio." Kushner likes to work against common assumptions, and doing so has won her a large and loyal fan base. "Sound and Spirit," on the air since April 1996, brings together diverse religions and cultures. On any given program, Kushner will discuss one theme, such as aging, fairy tales, Rome, motherhood, the book of Jonah, bicultural women, or pilgrimages. Most of the show is Kushner's narration, and she presents the arguments of notable authorities along with music from the Tennessee mountains to African chants and everything in between. She also offers a personal touch. With her soothing voice, humor, personal stories and eclectic music, the show is addictive.

Kushner, a Reconstructionist Jew, tries to avoid examining traditions in a patronizing manner—what she calls the "National Geographic approach to culture." Instead, she "tries to get inside people's traditions." During one show on Catholicism, she explored the theology with such knowledge and passion that many listeners wrote in, confused as to whether or not she was Catholic.

Still, despite her multicultural explorations and her belief that "there are many ways for humans to find help with the problems of life," Kushner is not multicultural in her observance. "You gotta pick one," she says, adding that her knowledge of other religions has only strengthened her ties to Judaism.

This summer, in response to high demand, Kushner released a compact disc, "Bringing Children into the World." A model Kushner creation, the CD has music from such well-known artists as Woody Guthrie and Sweet Honey in the Rock, as well as more obscure performers. According to Public Radio Source, "Bringing Children into the World" was hugely popular in its first week, and continues to be a hit. "Sound and Spirit" airs weekly; check out the show's web site at www.bgh.org/pri/spirit.

—Susannah Jaffe

A Mighty Collaboration

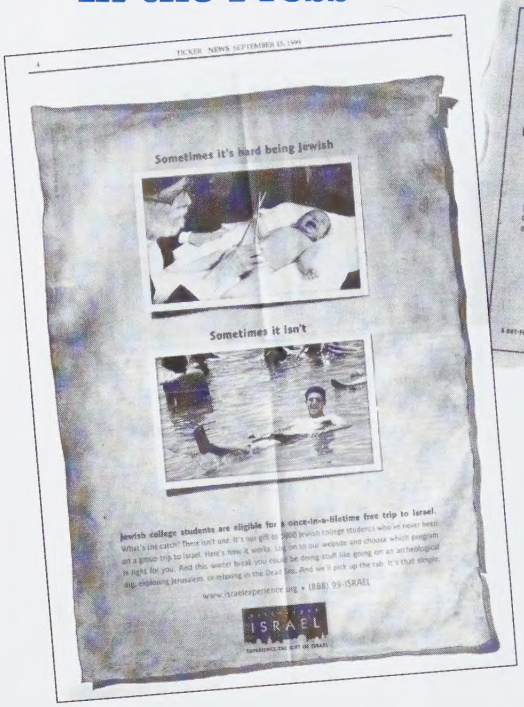
One is a funny playwright, the other a composer of somber operas. What might result from their artistic pairing? Well, a funny opera about the somber ritual of *tashlich*, **"The Festival of Regrets."**

The creation of playwright **Wendy Wasserstein** and New York City Opera composer-in-residence **Deborah Drattell,** "The Festival of Regrets" marks the High Holiday ritual when Jews symbolically throw their sins—crumbs—into a body of water. This rendition gathers a cast of stereotypically Jewish characters—a divorced woman and her hen-pecking mother ("You had a bad year; you tried a shrink; you tried a facial."); the middle-aged ex-husband "searching for meaning"; the assimilated teenage boy ignorant of the rituals he witnesses. At times mournful, at times sarcastically funny, this musical collaboration of two Jewish women takes a surprising turn for the redemptive.

"The Festival of Regrets" is Act One of a three-act opera, "Central Park." The opera premiered in July at Glimmerglass Opera (where Drattell's "Lilith" premiered last summer) and opened in November at the New York City Opera. It will air nationally on PBS' Great Performances on January 19. Check local listings.

—Sarah Blustain

Oy Vey: Nightmares In the Press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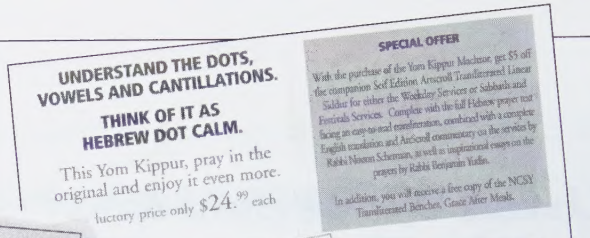
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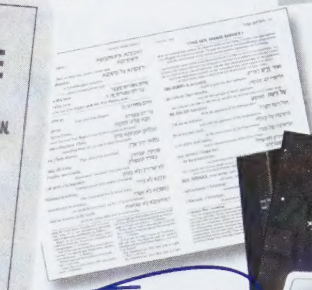

God understands all languages, but He *likes* Hebrew.

(left to right): Advertisement for free young adult trips to Israel that ran in The New York Times, the New York Jewish Week and elsewhere; ad from The New York Times; a flyer sent out by The Orthodox Union; and an advertising supplement to The New York Times, in October.

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Rabbi Julie Spitzer, z"l

Julie Spitzer, a leader in the fight against spousal abuse, died of ovarian cancer in October at the age of 41. Spitzer, a rabbi, educator and activist within the Reform movement, was an early voice addressing issues of domestic violence within the Jewish community.

Spitzer was the author of *When Love Is Not Enough: Spousal Abuse in Rabbinic and Contemporary Judaism* (Women of Reform Judaism) and editor of *Kulanu: A Program for Congregations Implementing Gay and Lesbian Inclusion* (UAHC Press). A member of the national advisory board of the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, she contributed an article to the first issue of their Journal of Religion and Abuse: Advocacy, Pastoral Care and Prevention, which came out in Fall 1999 (The Haworth Pastoral Press). Entitled "Without Justice, There Can Be No Healing," Spitzer's essay explores "the necessary inclusion of Jewish historical and religious experience in confronting abuse."

Fast Action!

Jewish women worldwide will be fasting this year around Purim to protest the plight of *agunot*, Jewish women whose husbands refuse to grant them a religious divorce. Last year the fasts, sponsored by the International Jewish Women's Human Rights Watch, were observed around the world between the Fast of Esther (the day before Purim, March 1 in 1999) and International Women's Day (March 8). A coalition of Israeli women demonstrated outside the chief rabbi's office, Belgian *agunot* gave testimony, Australian women refused breakfast at a United Nations celebration, and women assembled in Sarajevo for a workshop, "Women's Rights are Human Rights."

Organizations in each country are planning for next March—with one exception: the United States. Organize an event in your community. Visit the web site www.icjw.org.uk/ IJWHRW/ index.htm. —*SJ*

'Free Lori' From Peruvian Prison Cell

"It could be you or me. What happens to your life out there is not your destiny." Over 200 people walked away from Union Square with this thought in September at a rally to show support for Lori Berenson, an American who has been a political prisoner in Peru since 1996. Working in Peru as a freelance journalist, she was arrested for alleged activity in the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement, an organization tied to assassinations, kidnappings and drug-trafficking. According to her parents, at the trial Berenson was not allowed to offer evidence in her own defense; a hooded tribunal convicted her of treason and sentenced her to life in prison—no possibility of parole.

Since her arrest date, people worldwide have mobilized to show their support. Amnesty International has issued two Urgent Actions on her behalf. The Committee for Inter-American Human Rights created the Committee to Free Lori Berenson, its first project. The House of Representatives recently passed a resolution criticizing Peru for interference with the press and judicial and electoral institutions. Although the resolution doesn't mention Berenson, it marked an important moment in the political support for her release.

Berenson's imprisonment also has generated grass-roots support, including that of Great Small Works, which creates dramas on political issues and took up Berenson's case in New York's Union Square. Their play, "What You Do: The Story of Lori Berenson," presented a 20-foot puppet of Berenson, wearing the label "The Truth" and offering counterpoint to the "official" version offered by Peruvian authorities.

After the play, Mark and Rhoda Berenson, Lori's parents, addressed the crowd. They spoke of Lori's ailing physical condition and her high sprits and passed out petitions to be sent to President Clinton. Clinton has remained largely silent on the issue, even in meetings with Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori. The Berensons suggested that New Yorkers should not elect Hillary Clinton to the Senate as long as her husband is contributing to Berenson's incarceration. Visit the "Free Lori" web site at www.freelori.org.

—*SJ*

Jewish Women Are Watching

"Sexism is a sin. Shana Tova." With these words, an anonymous groups of women offered its first challenge to the Jewish community. Calling themselves "Jewish Women Watching," the group carried out its first kamikaze mission in September with a mock Rosh Hashanah card (also published as an advertisement in several Jewish newspapers), sent out to an impressive 1,500 Jewish leaders. The card, quoted above, issued the following directives: "Choose a woman keynote speaker …nominate women to your board… support working parents…recognize that women's issues are community issues."

The following month, JWW raised its voice outside a New York Jewish Community Relations Council conference on "Changing Realities: The New York Community in the 21st Century" when the organizers failed—initially—to include any women. Vocal community objection from philanthropist Barbara Dobkin, writer Letty Cottin Pogrebin and others before the conference forced four women onto the schedule. But seven JWW members were outside the UJA-Federation building, where the conference was taking place, registering their frustration.

SURPRISE! This typical holiday card held some unusual greetings.

Wearing black robes and masks with mouths symbolically taped shut, the women passed out neon stickers that read "JCRC: GET REAL" and "REALITY CHECK." Flyers featured a photo of a crowded room of men studying with the caption, "Is this the Jewish community of the 21st Century?"

Calls by LILITH to leaders of some major Jewish organizations elicited no comment. But John Ruskay, the newly chosen head of New York's UJA-Federation responded from a trip to Jerusalem to offer his support: "It serves as another way to raise awareness and consciousness of a continuing challenge in the Jewish community: how to more effectively create a more inclusive community that can be strengthened by the more extensive engagement of women in all levels of lay and professional leadership. While efforts have been undertaken, the agenda remains urgent." —*SB*

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Berlin Hosts Unusual Feminist Gathering

It was an uncommon sight—a dozen women, some wearing yarmulkes, strolling down Oranienburgerstrasse in Berlin. It was lunchtime for participants in Europe's first-ever conference for female rabbis, cantors and Jewish educators. Passers-by could not help noticing these women, openly Jewish, with "Bet Debora" name tags pinned to their lapels, meandering toward one of the neighborhood's several Israeli-style cafes.

It's not every day that one sees more than a *minyan's* worth of identifiable Jews in public in this city—where Jewish venues are under 24-hour police guard—let alone women in garb traditionally reserved for Jewish men.

The Bet Debora conference, held in May, was the brainchild of three German-Jewish women—Lara Daemmig, Elisa Klapheck and Monika Herweg. A forum for new ideas and current problems regarding women in Judaism, the conference also included lessons in chanting from the Torah and *haftorah*; tours of art galleries featuring female Jewish artists; holiday workshops; and a chance to dip in a *mikveh*. It included presentations by two dozen European women and one American cantor, and included both liberal and traditional Jews, as well a handful of non-Jews. Having drawn some 200 participants, they already are planning a repeat event for the year 2001.

The conference, which was sponsored by the Berlin Jewish Community, the Jewish College of Berlin, the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, and the City of Berlin, was quite revolutionary for European Jews, who in terms of liberal and egalitarian Judaism are at least a generation behind their American and British colleagues. Frequently, congregations face bitter fights from the traditional establishment—and not simply over the inclusion of women. Still, as the number of such progressive groups grows, the number of women participating in Jewish life is increasing.

Most sessions were held in the Jewish Community Center of Berlin, a new building attached to what remains of Berlin's "New Synagogue." Some 60 years ago, the world's first female rabbi, Rabbi Regina Jonas, stood in that sanctuary to deliver a sermon. Ordained in 1935, Jonas was deported to Theresienstadt with her mother in 1942. They died at Auschwitz just a few months before liberation.

"I learned a lot from her," said Klapheck, who recently edited and published the text of Regina Jonas' dissertation, "Can Women Wear Rabbinical Robes?" along with a biographical text. She is currently working on an English translation. Jonas, who came from an observant family, was not accepted as a rabbi in traditional circles. Klapheck said Jonas continued to deliver sermons in Theresienstadt, where she sometimes received a piece of bread as thanks.

It's not every day that one sees more than a minyan's worth of Jewish women in yarmulkes walking together in public.

For female Jewish activists coming to Berlin, the conference not only honored Jonas' memory; it also drew local Jewish women out of the woodwork, demonstrating a place for them in their community. Berlin officially has about 11,000 Jews, more than half of whom arrived in the last ten years from the former Soviet Union. The city today has an egalitarian *minyan* led informally by lay-leader Miriam Rosengarten (and attended by many women) and seven active non-egalitarian synagogues. Most post-Holocaust, continental European Jewish communities are officially Orthodox, but today the status quo is shaken by increasing demands for participation by women and for liberalization of the definition of who is a Jew.

Berlin is no exception. Its relatively new egalitarian congregation, started by a group of young Germans, only two years ago received official recognition and help from the official Berlin Jewish community. Since then, this small but dedicated congregation now has its own chapel with Torah and ark. An unspoken fact is that some regular attendees at the egalitarian services are not Jewish according to Jewish law, which is based on matrilineal descent. (They are not, however, counted in the *minyan* and do not get called to read from the Torah.) Some are considering conversion, but for now are content to learn and pray. Their presence alone, however, offers a challenge to Orthodox standards.

The very fact that an egalitarian congregation exists in Berlin with official support marks a sea change for Judaism in Germany. While the egalitarian group is more akin to an American liberal Conservative congregation, recently, another Reform-style congregation has begun meeting in Berlin, at the former American Army headquarters. In Frankfurt, the Jewish community is now financially supporting its own progressive congregation. Currently, a Swiss rabbi, Bea Wyler, is the only woman leading a congregation in Germany. But several conference participants were informally invited to help lead some of the rabbi-less congregations in Germany's growing Jewish community.

Klapheck, who taught herself Aramaic and learns Torah and Talmud on her own, said the situation for Jewish women in Europe is still affected by the Holocaust. "Because of the Shoah, development fell back. There were women who were active in religious areas before the Nazi time, but somehow it just wasn't possible for half a century afterward....I don't feel that I can find teachers here who will teach from a modern perspective," she said. "It is a challenge to wear a *tallit* or to become a rabbi because the community will not give you a chance to work there. You have to fight for it. And if you get it, you are alone."

—Toby Axelrod

The Kiev Connection

Women as Change-Agents in the FSU

By Rachel Blustain

Natasha Slabodyanik tells us to take a marker and map ourselves out on a piece of paper. In the upper left, she tells us, draw a picture of yourself. Inside write three traits that you like about your personality. Outside, write three traits that you like about your appearance. In the center write all the names of the women who are most important to you. And so on.

This is not what I expected.

I'm covering a conference of Project Kesher, an organization that has trained some 20 women from the former Soviet Union in Jewish community-building, women's health and sexuality and economic empowerment. These core members, who work mostly in the smaller cities and towns of Ukraine, meet regularly to plan projects in their own communities and elsewhere—a unique set-up because the leaders are local, not American or Israeli, and the ones in charge are women, not men. Kesher publishes a newsletter that goes to more than 5,000 women world-wide. It held its first conference in 1994 in Ukraine and since then has held 17 more in the FSU.

This weekend's conference, held in Chicago, is the first ever in America. It is a chance for the organization's American women to meet a handful of the FSU activists, and for both sides to brainstorm plans for the future. I thought I'd hear about social action and community organizing. But on this first night, we sing Jewish and '60s folk songs, women spontaneously hug, and I feel like I'm back in summer camp.

A heated discussion erupts after we've finished our drawings about whether it's all right for feminists to focus on what they like about their own appearances. It's funny that in this room of successful, activist, engaged women the one thing that most seems to absorb us, that rattles us to passionate depths, is this question of how we feel about how we look. I try to imagine the men of the Joint Distribution Committee engaged in a similar conversation. I can't.

At times, I am caught up in the emotion. I stand in a circle next to Irina, a woman I met during my own travels in the FSU, and she squeezes my hand. We sing a *niggun*, sad and sweet. Slabodyanik brings challah covers decorated by the women in the FSU to our last group meeting, and I experience a connection to women I've never met. A few times, I admit, I cry.

Other times, the process feels too self-consciously female, the passion a little forced. But if the means are emotional, the goal is practical. The point is to make real changes in women's lives.

So during the conference, one seminar focuses on how to help women start up small businesses: how to apply for grants,

what's the minimum needed to start a credit union, which ventures—mayonnaise, knitwear, aerobics—will succeed. Another, led by Planned Parenthood, looks at improving sex ed and women's health in the FSU. We discuss, for instance, the pros and cons of teaching women to do breast self-exams when there isn't anywhere to go for treatment if they do find a lump.

But the process of creating leaders to carry out these programs is a much more ambiguous task than raising money to start them or exporting Americans to run them. It's much harder to get women to say what they want for their own communities, and then have them put those desires into action.

Many of the American women understand. They've had to struggle to find their own voices. Marcia Cohn Spiegel, a major force in the Jewish Renewal movement once married to an alcoholic, worries about the effects empowering women will have on families in the FSU, where there are no shelters and little discussion of domestic abuse.

"It's a dangerous area we're treading on. It reminds me of who I was 50 years ago in my own marriage. I didn't become the first woman president of a Reform synagogue because I knew my marriage couldn't withstand it," she said.

"When I was a young girl, 70 years ago," said Elsie Goldstein, a political radical for most of her life and the oldest Project Kesher member in attendance, "women were too involved meeting the needs of their children, their husbands, to think about their own needs....I think that in the former Soviet Union many women are still struggling to achieve that right to be themselves."

That's why so much energy is devoted to forming relationships. It's a foundation on which American and Russian women can develop trust. It creates a network of support for women working in isolated communities. It's a model for community-building for these women to bring back to their own communities.

"If women aren't bonding, we have them sit around and paint their toenails together. We're willing to be as female as we need in order for the women to feel trusting," said Svetlana Yakimenko, the NIS director of Project Kesher. "My country got used to important bosses who told us all our lives what to do," she said. But at Project Kesher's conferences in the FSU, no one is allowed to speak for more than 10 minutes at a time or usurp the power.

"Sometimes what we do feels so female, the results so intangible," says Karyn Gershon, Kesher's executive director. But, Gershon insists, the results Project Kesher has achieved really are quantifiable.

Recently, Gershon said, "The JDC looked at their leaders [in Ukraine] and discovered that a disproportionate number of them were trained by us, and that our women had the best-kept books, were the most responsive, and had the most beautiful *cheseds*." After working on the margins for most of its existence, Project Kesher just this year was approached by three leaders of the JDC with a request for more information about Kesher's model of leadership training.

For years, attempts to build local leadership in the FSU were crippled as waves of Jewish activists emigrated. And the FSU is a region mired in corruption. Knowing who among the self-proclaimed Jewish leaders will prove to be a trustworthy partner is a daunting task for organizations entrusted with huge sums of money, facing enormous need.

While international Jewish organizations here have found local partners to work with, a certain distrust lingers. Because one group, the outsiders, have the money and the power, and another group, the locals, do not, Jewish life in the FSU can at times feel, even if benignly so, colonial.

Even at Project Kesher's conference, you can feel the slight condescension in the well-meaning comments of the American women: "There but for the grace of God..." and, "She looks like she could be my grandmother, or my great aunt," never, "She looks like she could be my daughter, or my sister."

"American women think we still live in old Russia, in old Ukraine. They think of it as the old country they left behind," said Slabodyanik, one of the FSU activists at the conference.

"When I first came to a Project Kesher seminar as a participant, it seemed to me American women were playing with us like children, and that they were not connected to our real life. When I am here, and I see how women here organize, I can see that they know what they are talking about," said Nina Klotsman, another of the FSU women in attendance. But, she adds, they don't understand life in the FSU.

The core belief of Project Kesher is that women in the FSU need to decide for themselves how to create their own communities. And that guiding principal allows for the power imbalance to begin to shift back. Ultimately, the task of fostering local leadership and handing over the reigns of control is a crucial one. Eventually, to be viable, Jewish life in the former Soviet Union needs to grow on domestic soil, not in America.

Five years ago, when she was 20, Slabodyanik attended her first Project Kesher conference. Now she is a mother, the head of the Youth Family Services in her hometown, and recently returned to school for a second career in social work. After her first conference, Slabodyanik

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Creating Feminist Leaders

Would you like to encourage women in your community to become Jewish feminist leaders, moving from curiosity to activism? A few pointers from Project Kesher's **Karyn Gershon**:

1. In beginner workshops, encourage women to speak publicly about themselves through questions and experiential activities, so that they become comfortable voicing their opinions.
2. Help them learn non-judgmental brainstorming and consensus building.
3. Offer mentoring by women leaders who have themselves been changemakers.
4. Introduce some fundamental principles of Judaism that help frame their understanding of the role of leaders in Jewish life: *tikkun olam* (repairing the world); *mitzvot* (commandments/good deeds); and *tzedakah* (acts of justice).

Taking Care

by Rachel Josefowitz Siegel

1988:
A feminist therapist at 64; Caregiving vs. Career

At 64, I am, like many women of my generation, just now at the height of my late-starting professional career. My private psychotherapy practice is flourishing; I publish, and get frequent requests to present papers and workshops.

On the other hand, I have less energy than I did five years ago. I don't know how much of my slowing down is due to my own aging, and how much is the stress of my 72-year-old husband's retirement and the deterioration of his health these past five years.

Medical crises and the death of age-mates have renewed our bonds with our siblings and with those old friends who are still alive, throwing me back into a world of unexamined heterosexual male-centeredness. Here my feminist activities and our egalitarian lifestyle are viewed with a mixture of amusement and discomfort. In contrast, among my feminist friends, I am often the oldest woman present and the only one still married.

The pressure to choose between family and profession has entered a new phase, with no role models for integrating these two vital aspects of life. The stress feels more acute and more constant than it did ten years ago, when death was not a steady companion, when my partner's life seemed less precarious, when we were both fully engaged in our professional lives, and when feminist consciousness was on the rise rather than suffering from backlash.

Ben suffered a serious heart attack. During the first hours in the local hospital, we had some quiet and tender moments of intimacy, and I did not call our children until later that day. Then I went into competent caregiver mode. I agonized about how to convey the news to our adult sons and daughter with the least pressure on them. As usual, I was less cautious with our daughter, who had been well trained to be my ally and automatic helper in the care-giving aspects of our family. Under stress, the feminist rebel in me reverted to the familiar and traditional sex roles and expectations of earlier years.

> My daughter was well trained to be my ally and automatic helper in caregiving.

Two years after Ben's heart attack, he had to hav emergency heart by-pass surgery. This time when called our children, I was no longer trying to protec them. Instead, I was consciously asking them to b there for me as well as for their father. The roles ha shifted. We, the parents, were now asking for th emotional support we had previously extended t them, our now-middle-aged children. The family dynamics changed subtly, as each of them respond ed in his or her own way to my new attitude. My self-image had changed. I cried when I heard a song about aging parents, seeing myself for the first time as that parent, yet sensing that for others the song expressed their feelings as middle-aged daughters.

During these periods of persona crisis, I learned rather painfully tha there were only a handful of individuals who were able to respond to my vulnerability. Far too many friends and family needed me to remain strong and competent at all times. People's gender-role expectations got in the way of the kind of genuine support I could have used. Some of my feminist friends wanted me to remain totally focused on my own needs and professional aspirations, as if my need to be close and supportive to my partner were not also my own need. Most of my more traditional friends and family conveyed surprise and disbelief that anything at all could take me away from my husband at such a time, as if my work were totally unimportant and my constant presence were essential to my husband's recovery. When illness strikes, many women my age feel the pressure to give up the work that has given new meaning to our lives and return to volunteering and caregiving.

I felt an increasing sense of loneliness and isolation, as it became clearer to me how very few of my friends were open to talking in depth about illness or death. One of my younger friends was frightened and distressed when I cried in front of her, saying, "You're such a role model, it's really hard for me to see you so upset."

Isolated, and on the receiving end of so much ambivalent mother-transference, I felt again my old anger at the double-bind messages that society imposes on women of my generation.

take care, verb:
1) assume responsibility for the care of others;
2) preserve one's own well-being;
3) accept help for one's own needs.

PHOTOS (HEADSHOTS) ON PAGES 12-15 BY LAYLE SILBERT, NEW YORK, NEW YORK

1999:

Now an "old Jewish woman" at 75, she speaks her Manifesto

At 75, I do not anticipate moving in with my children, as my mother and mother-in-law expected to, nor do I count on having my daughter become my full-time caregiver and companion. I want to be self-sufficient for as long as possible, and not complicate my children's lives.

In the Jewish tradition of our ancestors, I expect my children to respect and honor me, to comfort me in my old age and in times of need. But how?

I often feel silenced and invisible, as an old woman in a youth-oriented society. My interviews with other old women seem to indicate a process similar to that of adolescent girls, when we maintain silences in order to remain connected with the people in our lives whom we love and who are important to us. In the natural progression of aging, we survive the loss of many friends and loved ones every year; even our doctors and other professionals retire or die, reducing our circle of supportive people. Our need to remain on good terms with those we love, and those who care for us, becomes more pressing when we are alone and constantly reminded of our own mortality.

I was delighted to discover Pauline Wengeroff, writing in her seventieth year at the turn of the last century:

> While to us, obedience to our parents' commands were sacred and inviolable, now, we must submit to our children, subordinating ourselves utterly to their wishes. As was once the case with regard to our parents, so now a word from our children enjoins us to be silent, to hold our tongues....If we, as children, listened while our parents told us of all they had experienced, we now keep silent and take careful note, full of pleasure and pride, as our children speak about their lives and ideals. The obsequiousness we show to our children turns them into egoists and tyrants over us.

Today many of us, no matter how vocal we've been in our work settings and in our community, still feel silenced within our own families. My adult children are supersensitive to any remark that could be heard as a criticism from me, while they feel free to criticize my way of life, my habits of speech, my housekeeping and my politics. I am not alone in having felt great pain when a child has been less accepting of me than I am of her or him. Our culture permits and even encourages mother blaming and criticizing, while placing a taboo on mothers who make negative remarks about our children. When we transgress, the "child's" response is often more harsh than the mother's infringement.

Some of the tension I feel with my grown children is over my feminism. My sons often resist or resent my opinions, and the feminist elements that I include at the seder, for example. I don't want to disenfranchise my sons when I claim my own place within Jewish ritual; on the other hand, my daughter still feels the scars of having been Jewishly silenced as a female child.

We know how wrong a man can be when making pronouncements about women. Have we questioned how wrong a child can be in describing her or his mother? Several mothers have told me that their offspring don't have a clue about how Mom really feels, when they think they understand her. More often than not, the child does not ask or listen when Mom tries to explain herself.

> Adult children misperceive their old mothers as overly powerful. In fact we are in the process of losing power and control over our bodies and our circumstances.

The patriarchal assumption that exaggerates the power of women adds to the misperceptions about old mothers. Old mothers in general have very little power unless we are wealthy enough to control the distribution or withholding of generous gifts and inheritance. We are often misperceived as overly powerful when in fact we are in the process of losing power and control over our bodies and our social and economic circumstances. The false attribution of power, even when we do not claim or use such power, seems to give our children, and the experts who advise them, permission to discount our words, criticize us, or pathologize us. When we try to understand our child's world or to share a piece of our own experience, we run into unexpected outbursts of resentment. We do not feel at all powerful when we are told: "You don't realize how powerful you are—or how powerful your words are. When you ask a question it feels like an interrogation, and when you make suggestions it feels like a criticism of how we do things."

It may be difficult for our children to take in the fact that the aging mother is no longer the all-powerful figure of their early childhood, especially when they live far away and only see us once or twice a year. It is they who now have adult power and we who are beginning to lose some of it.

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The Ways of Love & Rage

Duty and Intractable Sexism Fuel a Complex Caregiving History

by Jane Blum

My mother had a hard life.

She was born in India in 1908 into a prominent aristocratic Baghdadian Jewish family, but she was brought up in large part by servants. Having never been allowed to enter the kitchen, never having bought her own clothes, she was ill-prepared at the age of 24 to be introduced, and married off, within a space of ten days to a man 15 years her senior who would take her half way around the world—certainly not to a man as strong willed, self-motivated and eccentric as my father. He had grown up in Baghdad, a hotbed even now of patriarchalism, which only enhanced the extremism of his tendencies.

Fifty years ahead of his time in attitudes towards food and health, he was adamant, for instance, that he could not drink milk that had been commercially pasteurized. It was my mother, however, who would have to take the empty bottles to the farmer to fill up, it was her legs at which the chickens pecked on her way to the door to fetch the farmer's wife. No slouch himself, he boiled the gallons of milk in big heavy copper pots over a wooden fire in a fireplace in our basement. But it was she who found a way to pour it from those pots into narrow goose-necked gallon bottles, having already painstakingly struggled past those same narrow necks to wash out any milk residues which would make the new batch sour.

My first taste of how onerous my father could be without the interventions of my mother came in the form of that very same milk when she went back to India for her first visit, in 1948, when I was eight. I was not allowed to leave the house each morning before I finished a large glass of smoky boiled milk, untouched by flavoring or even by straining, nauseatingly alert for a mouthful of slimy skin that was circulating all through it. I was late for school every day.

And that was only the milk.

Buffeted from country to country in the chaos of world war, my parents had made their way to Westchester, New York; but my father's heart was always in Israel, where he could buy his curative biblical spices grown in their native soil, and where he said he felt healthier. He would go at least once a year, often leaving on a whim for months at a time in the days when the crossing was made by ocean liner. And then just as abruptly turning up again, sometimes with just a knock on the door that signaled the end of our more carefree lifestyle, the abrupt resumption of the restrictive food and family dynamics that pertained before he left.

He would sit down at the dining table: "You give me my dinner." And my mother, with superior lineage, physical loveliness, social cachet, and even height, would serve him his dinner. She had been indoctrinated from childhood into the value of submission, whether to religious or social mores, but it is little wonder that from the beginning, she looked to her three children, her first-born son and the two girls, as the source of her solace and support.

Perhaps because a great deal had always been expected of us, as our parents grew older, all three of us proved significantly willing to contribute quite generously to their care. It certainly was not always smooth. My mother and I had a difficult relationship. However, starting in 1969, when the first of my two daughters was born, we entered a 16-year honeymoon period. She gave to me through them, and I, in turn, looked out for her, particularly when my father was away. I called her daily and, other than business matters, which were shared exclusively between herself and my brother, I was there when she needed something.

I was there in 1976 when my father began significantly extending his annual visits to Israel. He bought a house and informed us that he wasn't coming back. He wanted my mother to stay with him,

but she made a choice. She would stay for the summer but she didn't want, she said, to be separated from "the children." He began transferring large sums of money from his New York account, investing in what my mother correctly suspected were bogus real estate scams. *If you want him to stop,* I told her finally, *you have to go. But I will not abandon you there.*

It seemed at the time the logical solution. My father in 1981 was 88 years old; my mother at 73 still seemed young and in good health. I didn't know then that she had less time left than he did. In retrospect, once again he dominated her with his will, and I was the instrument that helped him to do so.

As I had promised, I went to Israel with him every summer with my two children for the next five years, leaving my husband at home, as soon as school was out at the end of June. It was a time when I learned to spend time doing nothing, struggling through endless observant Saturdays, only to be scolded for minor infractions. I kept a calendar, and each morning circled the day, each evening crossed it out. Still, there were also many moments of enjoyment and special experiences. My mother would spend the fall and winter with him, and they would return to New Jersey together each March for Passover, remaining until the end of June, when I was ready to go again.

I have no doubt it was something I did because of the special relationship I had at the time with my mother. But that relationship was to fall apart. My brother had married late in life and his wife was pregnant. My parents announced from Israel that they would come back for a boy baby, not for a girl. Despite my objections, my mother said only that 'Pa,' as we called him, wanted it that way.

Perhaps my fragile honeymoon with my mother would have been threatened by the birth of any new grandchild. But the 'girls' had had girls and my brother had a boy. In that atmosphere, it was ripe for me to note that there had been no celebration when my children were born, no party when I got engaged, that my brother always sat at the tail—the other head—of the table. I was well aware of the traditional sexism of my family. But after all my years of building a place for myself inside the family, I fully expected to receive acknowledgement, even a certain sympathy, when I stated the obvious.

It was not forthcoming. To this day, my brother refers to my distress during that period as 'a chip on my shoulder.' Trapped in my anger, I was both isolated and heartbroken. The words I wrote at the time to my mother came from the heart, and still resonate: "I won't say that what I gave to you I didn't give for my own reasons, but I gave considerable, and what did it gain me, not even the right to say when I suffer. It is time for me to loosen the bonds." Words of anger that were braver than I was. Far more often, I was consumed with guilt, heartbroken also for her, that the daughter she had said had been like a mother to her, that had been at least a friend, turned out in her eyes not to be so.

In 1988, at the height of our rift, my mother was stricken with an uncommon and deadly autoimmune disease. She came back for Passover already showing as yet undiagnosed symptoms of illness. Her body, as if unable to express its distress sufficiently against foreign agents, turned against itself. My resolve to be angry had already begun to break up. I would come to feel, whatever science may have to say, that it was my defection, within the context of her isolation in at the end of a lifetime burdened by conformity to external standards, that tipped the balance of her emotional, and physical, ability to cope. When she went to the hospital, she came to my house to recuperate. I was the only one who had never moved away.

My mother returned to Israel that summer, but the symptoms of illness intensified. By that time, the participation in caregiving was much more equal. My sister had begun taking a yearly turn. My brother also went, albeit on his schedule. For two years, I had not gone at all. This time, my brother and I went together to get my mother medical attention, and to set up someone to care for her in the house. There was some relief in me when she refused our requests to bring her back.

> I went to Israel each summer—all those years.

My sister finally brought my mother back in September with kidney failure. Despite a driving phobia, I went almost daily from Westchester to the hospital in New Jersey. My sister, who was working, regularly came in from Boston for the weekend. My brother would come from Montreal for weeks at a time. He was the one who wanted to continue on with tests when to the rest of us tests had become a pointless ordeal. But such disagreements were offset by the fact that he was willing to contribute to a significant extent.

My mother lived only until the middle of December, one week past her 80th birthday. For the five years that my father lived after her death, we continued to share the burden. He was happy in his house in Israel and he had a loyal housekeeper. I, at least, preferred to commute to Israel than to bring him as a permanent resident to my home. We tried to adhere to a schedule in which each of us went for six weeks twice a year, which would leave him alone with his housekeeper and a friend who visited daily for just six weeks following each visit. When he broke his hip, we all ended up there together. I spent a couple of months with him in England at a cousin's house during the Gulf War, after which my own marriage temporarily broke up. My sister took a six month leave from work to stay with him. My brother went with his family for a year.

My father's last year was spent in my brother's home in Montreal. Although my sister and I went for visits, in the end it was my brother who took responsibility. In my cynical perception, it seemed he took control of my father as he had taken control of the business. And as with my mother, he couldn't let go. He became obsessed with the idea of inserting a feeding tube into this man who had scoffed for 100 years at medical intrusiveness. But whatever divisiveness there was was offset once again by the fact that my brother was carrying such a large part of the burden.

And yet in the end, for all the family loyalty that was not only expected but freely given, and for all that I believe in the sincerity of my parents' love and appreciation for myself and my children, I continued to be faced with the moments of bitterness that surfaced with the birth of my nephew. I never did manage to loosen the bonds, but staying continued to corrode my heart.

Although there was a will dividing things pretty much equally here in the U.S., my father was not one to be impressed with such legal technicalities. There came a moment when he thought that death was imminent. I, the youngest, for a long time had been considered to be his favorite, but in the crisis of the moment, the drift of his true feelings emerged. "Call the broker in New York," he instructed a family friend. "Tell him to write out a check for all my stocks, tell him to put it in the name of my son." Til the end of his life, my father would complain that his own father had preferred his brother, giving him all his money. When I pointed out the parallel, "But we had only one son," he said to me.

Much more painful was the moment, the day in Israel, when I discovered the letter of instructions in my mother's handwriting, drawing up the Israeli will giving all my father's Israeli assets, which were in truth a small part of his overall estate, to my brother. I don't begrudge that she did it, but that she did it even as she was ensuring the futility of all my attempts to have her acknowledge my brother's special status. And that she did it at the same time as my sister and I were sharing the bulk of the burden of relieving her in Israel. In fact, my sister unknowingly was the courier delivering the necessary papers from her to the lawyer. Though my mother suffered all her life from biased gender roles, she did not try to protect her daughters from the same. On the contrary, she became the ruthless guardian of them.

Ten years after her death, I still puzzle over the question of the Israeli assets. Never one to be cornered as the target of criticism, my mother would have said that it was my father who wanted those assets to go to my brother—and that she just facilitated him. Or it may have been my brother, who never thought he received adequate monetary recognition for his contribution to the business, who had asked for it. Then again, maybe it was my mother herself who wanted to make this last gesture to her first born and only son. Or maybe—just maybe—it was my unwanted complaints that pushed her into it.

In the end, the discovery of that will added to, but did not basically change, the nature of my disconnection from my mother, that for all my imploring of her, time and again she walked metaphorically tight-lipped away from me, never giving me the satisfaction of the simple acknowledgement that I asked from her; a fact now frozen in time ever since she entered the vortex that whooshed her altogether out of my life—dizzyingly increasing in the last moments the velocity and intensity but really only widening the gap that already divided us.

Despite my greedy anticipation for relief as her end neared, I mourned for her far longer and more bitterly than I would mourn for my father. ■

Jane Blum is a pseudonym for a writer living in the New York area.

Helping Families Help Their Elders

At a time when 28 million Americans serve as informal caregivers to elderly family members and friends, the complicated issues around caregiving are just beginning to emerge. "Baby-boomers plan for everything except eldercare," says Susan Friedman, the executive director of the Grotta Foundation for Senior Care. The Foundation believes its mission is to change that.

The Grotta Foundation, which has helped to make possible LILITH's year-long look at women as the caregivers and the cared-for, has an interesting history. It is one of the emerging "conversion foundations"—an independent, permanently endowed grant-making organization that gives away money acquired when a not-for-profit institution (in this case The Grotta Center, a nursing home and rehabilitation center that operated in New Jersey for 75 years) is bought by a for-profit enterprise. Members of the Grotta Foundation's board include grandchildren of former volunteers at the Grotta Center. The foundation was created in 1993, and subsequently the board decided that the money from the sale should help support projects in two areas: family elder caregiving and synagogue-based programs, both relatively uncharted areas. Although the Foundation is non-sectarian in its funding, it has a particular interest in the welfare of the Jewish elderly.

To date, the Foundation has funded more than 90 New Jersey-based and national organizations involved with eldercare, totaling more than a million dollars. In an effort to further raise public and philanthropic awareness of the importance of caregiver issues, in October the Grotta Foundation, in conjunction with Fordham University in New York and Grantmakers in Aging completed "Family Elder Caregiving: The Grotta Report on Philanthropic Trends and Best Practice Models." Friedman hopes that the report, which identified 45 foundations and 54 programs nationwide, will not only stimulate interest among funders but also will spur agencies, synagogues and other organizations to consider potential services for this growing population.

—Rachel Nierenberg

Taking Care

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The pathologizing of old women is another source of painful silencing. We are often labeled self-centered, depressed or paranoid when we voice the negative feelings that can accompany the natural diminution of faculties in old age. Our words and concerns are not taken as seriously as the words of old men by the professionals who should be there to serve us, such as doctors, lawyers and therapists. Our families or caregivers tend to see our reactions as personal flaws or weaknesses, and so do we, instead of responding to these feelings as appropriate to our life situation. We have good reasons to feel sad or angry at times, and would like to be able to talk about them.

I am one of the many American Jewish widows who, unfortunately, do not live near enough to be comforted and cared for by my children. I know and understand that my children lead the kind of lives that do not permit frequent and leisurely visits; the demands of their work and the pace of life make such closeness and regularity of caring nearly impossible

Old mothers, especially if our children live at a distance, often feel that our children's visits depend on how well we behave ourselves. Many of us feel that we must not raise controversial issues, ask personal questions, criticize, or express our personal preferences. When they stay away, we wonder if we've done something wrong, or whether they would come more often or stay longer if we did it right. We are haunted by true stories of children who have not spoken to their mothers for months or even years. One mother in her 70s, upon returning from a brief visit with her previously estranged daughter, said: "If I speak funny, it's because I feel as if my tongue is shorter—I had to bite it so many times."

My husband died nearly ten years ago. I still miss him, and I miss the comfort and privileges of our shared existence. When I am tired or ill I am prone to bouts of longing and loneliness, wishing my children would call more often or would include me in their plans. I am not always sure of my place in their lives.

Still in good health and leading an active life, I feel an urgent need to talk about and prepare for the final stage of life. My inclination is to turn to my children for discussions of financial, legal and medical issues. I have learned to be patient, for my midlife children are facing their own midlife transitions at work and at home and do not always have the time or the psychic energy to focus on my concerns. It has taken us a few years to get beyond the stage of: "Oh Mom, you don't have to think about that yet," and I feel much better for having aired my concerns and shared some of my decisions with them.

I believe that my children value our Jewish tradition of treating elders with respect as much as I do. In that spirit, I have made my wishes very clear by talking with each of my children, by writing a living will, and by appointing a health care proxy. I have even drawn up a list of simple things to remember about what I like—in food, blankets, music—in case I lose the ability to tell them.

I was able to be with my husband in his final journey. I will surely need my children's help when my time approaches. There will be no clear models to guide the way. Our roles will change, but I hope that that they will not simply be reversed. The condition of infirmity is not equal to that of childhood, and I hope that I will be treated as an adult whose opinions and preferences will be honored. ■

Rachel J. Siegel is co-editor of Jewish Women in Therapy: Seen But Not Heard; *the award-winning* Celebrating the Lives of Jewish Women: Patterns in a Feminist Sampler; *and a forthcoming anthology on Jewish mothers.*

Readings on Eldercare

Good Daughters: Loving Our Mothers as They Age

by Patricia Beard (Warner Books, $23)
Explores the emotional and practical complications that arise for adult daughters as their mothers age. Beard, a journalist, looks at the conflicts of baby-boom women as they try to care for their mothers at the same time that they work outside the home, have their children later in life, and often raise them in single-parent homes. Beard also attends to daughters' mourning for their mothers long before they are gone, and long after.

Elder Care: What to Look For, What to Look Out For

by Thomas M. Cassidy (New Horizon Press, $14.95)
A former senior special investigator for the New York State Attorney General's Office, Cassidy offers lessons from his decades battling elder-care crimes. With anecdotes and statistics, he addresses the many ways elders may be taken advantage of and hurt in the course of their care—at home, in nursing homes, through Social Security and Medicare—and offers specific guidelines for preventing such abuse.

Visiting the Sick: The Mitzvah of Bikur Cholim

by Sharon Selib Epstein (Aronson, $25)
Epstein discusses the *mitzvah* of visiting the sick and the dying, with practical guidance, as well as explorations of the fears, and comforts, that accompany this ethical obligation.

Mind's Eye

by Paul Fleischman (Henry Holt, $15.95)
An elderly woman in a nursing home take an imaginary journey through Italy with the help of an old Baedeker and a 16-year-old girl who reads it to her. Written as a dialogue between the two, this is a touching book for young adults.

Dutiful Daughters: Caring for Our Parents as They Grow Old

edited by Jean Gould (Seal Press, $16.95)
This collection of personal accounts, written by women who are caring for their aging parents, portrays the experiences of "sandwich generation" women caught between the needs of their their parents and their children.

Respect

by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot (Perseus, $23)
In six portraits of interpersonal relationships, Lawrence-Lightfoot explores the hypothesis that respect is the most powerful ingredient in any relationship. The dramas she portrays include everything from scenes at a birthing center to a deathbed.

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Will She Be the First Orthodox Woman Rabbi?

Haviva Ner-David struggles to integrate 'Modern' and 'Orthodox' in this preview of "Life on the Fringes: A Feminist Journey Towards Traditional Rabbinical Ordination" (JFL Books)

Each weekday morning I drape my *tallit*, my prayer shawl, over my head, and suddenly it is dark. I block out all distractions for a completely private moment with God. I inhale a deep breath of clean morning air, thinking about life and Jerusalem's light and the kindness that God has bestowed on me, and say in Hebrew: "How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! The children of humanity take refuge in the shadow of Your wings."

With my white and gray *tallit* now wrapped around me, I take my *tefillin*, phylacteries, out of their worn velvet bag. Along with my first pair of *tefillin*, the bag too once belonged to my husband's great uncle—who, it is fair to say, would not be thrilled to know that I, a woman, am the inheritor of his *tefillin*. Although it is not prohibited for women to wear *tefillin*, traditionally only men have worn them, except for a few exceptions recorded throughout Jewish history. Michal, the daughter of King Saul and King David's first wife, the Talmud tells us, "wore *tefillin* and the Sages did not protest her action." (There is also a tradition that the three daughters of Rashi—the 11th century French biblical and talmudic commentator—wore *tefillin*, as did Chana Rochel Werbermacher, the Maiden of Ludomir, a Hasidic woman who had a large following in the 19th century.)

In the past two decades, since women have been given the opportunity to become rabbis in the Conservative movement and must, as a requirement for ordination, wear *tefillin* every morning when they pray, there have been more women taking on this practice. But I cannot think of more than 20 women I know of who are not Conservative rabbis and who wear *tefillin*.

When I was in grade school, as the boys in my class came of bar mitzvah age, they began to show up for school *tefillot*, prayers, in the mornings with their *tefillin*, which are worn during morning prayers on weekdays. Since the boys were three years old, they had always worn their *tzitzit* and *kippot*, while the girls did not, but at that point in my childhood, those inequities seemed merely due to a sociological gender difference, comparable to the boys having short hair and the girls wearing skirts and dresses. It was more of a dress-code disparity that didn't hold great religious significance for me. However, when those same boys who had for years been wearing

their *kippot* and *tzitzit* showed up in seventh grade with their blue velvet bags containing their shining new leather *tefillin*, I was bothered terribly by the fact that they had something tangible to show for their new status as adults in our religion and I had nothing. Coming of age for my male peers meant taking on more *mitzvot*, while for me it meant being excluded from them. This was a harsh and poignant awakening to my place as a young woman in Jewish religious life.

When my brothers reached the age of bar mitzvah, they received their own pairs of *tefillin*. I got my ears pierced. Ten years after my bat mitzvah, I told my mother, "If and when I have daughters, I want them to do all the *mitzvot*, including the ones they aren't obligated to perform."

"Like what?" my mother asked.

"Like *tefillin*," I immediately answered, as though it was an obvious observation. Of course my daughters would pray with *tefillin*, I thought. That's when it occurred to me: How could I expect a daughter of mine to put on *tefillin* if I didn't do so myself? I would have to be a role model for her. I would have to commit to putting on *tefillin* every morning, and I would have to start before my children were born, not after.

The next morning my husband, Jacob, presented me with my first pair of *tefillin*. He stood behind me and demonstrated how to wrap the straps that attach to one of the boxes around my arm and put the other box on my head, letting the straps from that box hang down my torso. He told me at which point in putting on the *tefillin* I should say the *brachot*, the blessings.

I felt in one part of me as if I were doing something wrong by donning this ritual object. At the same time, I knew that what I was doing was so very right, and at that moment, in a place deep within myself, I felt reborn as a religious Jewish feminist. The two worlds of my childhood—the modern and the Orthodox—actually met fully. For the first time in a long time I did not feel torn apart as I recited the biblical verse in the *Sh'ma* about *tefillin*.

Nevertheless, wearing the *tefillin* was distracting at first. Five years later, I've come to see this heightened awareness of the *tefillin* as part of the point of wearing them. They help focus me on my prayers and the words I am saying. Prayer now requires for me the additional concrete physical act of wrapping the *tefillin* and the commitment to performing this act every day. It is easier to rationalize away a commitment to daily prayer alone, because prayer can be so amorphous and subjective. If I didn't have time to devote to sitting and praying at home in the morning, or going to synagogue, I could tell myself, "Well, I'll just pray on the bus or as I walk the kids to school." But with *tefillin* this is not an option; therefore, my prayer act has become more serious and deliberate. My commitment to wearing *tefillin* when I pray has forced me to set aside this much-needed time each morning to spend with God.

The source of this practice is in the ancient biblical text: "And you shall tie them as a sign on your arm, and they shall be an emblem between your eyes." When I read this verse in Deuteronomy, I feel the words speaking to me. Having donned both my arm and head *tefillin*, I recite the following verse, meditating on my personal *brit*, or covenant, with God: "I will betroth you to Me forever, and I will betroth you to Me with righteousness, justice, kindness and mercy. I will betroth you to Me with fidelity, and you will know God."

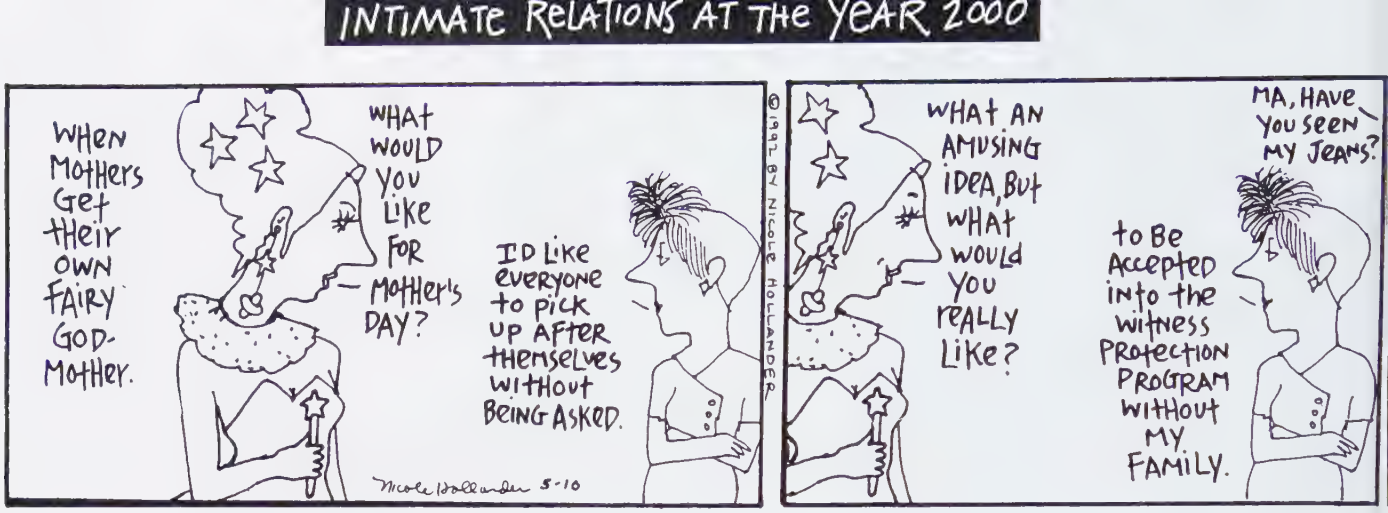
How will I strive to fulfill my side of the *brit* today? The *tefillin* remind me that my obligation to help bring God's divine plan into the human world is through the actions of my hands and the thoughts in my lead. If my thinking remains holy, so will my deeds. With two small children, I know that it is not easy to always keep my thoughts or my actions in such a lofty sphere. Although my life has never seemed so infused with purpose as it has since I first held my daughter Michal to my breast, it is easy to lose sight of the bigger picture while changing diapers and trying not to lose patience when my one-year-old cries in his stroller because he wants to get home and my three-year-old refuses to walk another inch. That is why this time of reflection, before I am bombarded with everyone else's needs, is so important to me.

It is commonly believed that the reason the Rabbis exempted women from performing certain time-bound *mitzvot*, such as putting on *tefillin*, is that women's time belongs to others—their children and their husbands. Therefore, they should not feel pressured to take time away from nurturing others in order to fulfill God's will. It became clear to me that the strong suggestion by medieval and modern rabbis that women not wear *tefillin* is just one of the ways in which they surrounded these ritual objects with rules and regulations. There is a specific time to wear them, a specific way to put them on and take them off, and there is a specific group of people who should wear them. Guarding their holiness also means restricting their use and relegating it to a select group.

Putting a pair of tefillin on my body as a child would have felt almost as transgressive as eating pork.

With all the male baggage that goes along with performing this *mitzvah*, why don't I choose to create a new ritual, a female reinterpretation of this commandment? Since I began wearing *tefillin*, I feel my prayers lifted to a higher plane, coming from a deeper place. I feel bound to God as I bind God's words to my arm and head with these holy straps.

Putting a pair of *tefillin* on my body as a child would have felt almost as transgressive as my eating pork. I did not know the intricacies of the laws relating to women wearing *tefillin*; I just knew that women did not wear them. Intuitively, I knew that my skin was not supposed to touch that leather because I was a girl and would some day become a woman. Somehow my skin, my body, was different from that of my brothers. The first time that I pressed the holy leather of Jacob's great-uncle's *tefillin* next to my skin, I knew I had taken back a *mitzvah* that had been stolen from me, that was rightfully mine. ■


INTIMATE RELATIONS AT THE YEAR 2000
WHEN MOTHERS GET THEIR OWN FAIRY GOD-MOTHER.
WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE FOR MOTHER'S DAY?
I'D LIKE EVERYONE TO PICK UP AFTER THEMSELVES WITHOUT BEING ASKED.
©1997 BY NICOLE HOLLANDER
Nicole Hollander 5-10
WHAT AN AMUSING IDEA, BUT WHAT WOULD YOU REALLY LIKE?
MA, HAVE YOU SEEN MY JEANS?
TO BE ACCEPTED INTO THE WITNESS PROTECTION PROGRAM WITHOUT MY FAMILY.

ARE OUR HOME LIVES LIBERATED YET?

When LILITH, in 1980, asked women to fantasize about life in the year 2000, the dreams were grand: full parity of women in the Jewish community in a world purged of sexism. Now that we're actually at the millennium, our scrutiny is closer to the bone and closer to home. The measure of feminist progress may be right under our own roofs. How far along have we really come? Six women tell about their closest relationships, and we ask you, dear readers, to 'fess up also, in the questionnaire that follows.

OUR GENDERED SELVES WRESTLE

by Rabbi Susan Fendrick

SCENE I. "Hi, honey, it's me. Listen, I hope you can get home from work sooner rather than later. I've been frustrated recently that I seem to be doing most of the cleaning and cooking when we have Shabbat guests. I want to figure out how we can do this better. See you soon. Oh, don't worry about the challah, I got it this morning. Bye."

A message on my work voice-mail from my boyfriend.

When his cousin and her partner come over for Shabbat dinner, I find myself explaining how we're trying to make sure that B. learns to sit down in his own kitchen. I feel a little defensive. I don't want them to think that I take advantage of him, and I don't want them to think, as I scurry around making sure he sits, that I always serve and clean up. I tell them about writing this piece, and my fear that feminism is still stuck in "Who's doing the housework?" S. points out, "But it is an eternal issue, in every family; it's no wonder we're still asking that question." I regret later not asking them how they—a lesbian couple together 23 years, one spouse working primarily outside of the home, one primarily at home—divide up responsibilities, handle feelings of imbalance, resentment, guilt.

Our gendered selves wrestle with issues in ways that don't fall neatly along gender lines. It is important that we work this out, in a fair and healthy way. But it is also secretly satisfying to me that—by accident and temperament, not by any great virtue or revolutionary commitment—in our relationship it is the woman who (maybe?) isn't pulling her share of the weight, and the man who (probably) is doing more of the domestic work.

SCENE II. We go away together, eight or nine couples each time, gay and straight, more children each year, for the first half of Sukkot. We build our own *sukkah*. It is enormous, at once grotesque and gorgeous. It easily fits 20 people for a sit-down meal.

During our second lunch in the *sukkah*, someone raises the question: Why was it mostly men who were building, chopping, attaching, driving a tractor and cutting down trees, and mostly women doing childcare? The discussion continues, trickling throughout the day and beyond: Is this really how it broke down? To the extent that the division of labor "naturally" fell that way, what do we think about that? How many and which of us feel competent doing demanding physical work? How do we affect the children through the choices we make, the work we do?

We agreed that we need to arrange for more childcare on *sukkah*-building day. That there is a complex relationship between the choices individuals, couples and families make, and the decisions that communities make. And that we'll keep thinking and talking. But not everyone saw the breakdown primarily along gender lines, instead observing other divisions, emphasizing other dynamics. Choices are a tricky combination of temperament and ability, learning and practice, obligation (perceived or real) and habit, and more. None of these components can be reduced to gender, but none can be understood without it.

Given our annual scurrying to get the *sukkah* up and kosher before the sun disappears behind the corn stalks, is it most important to just get it done? Or, as we try to build community, are we willing to work towards transformation: to learn new skills, to challenge ourselves on several levels, to push beyond what we do most "naturally"?

Rabbi Susan P. Fendrick is the editor of SocialAction.com, a new publication of Jewish Family & Life!.

COOKING in the E.R.

by Deborah B. Goldberg

My husband Mickey and I met and courted over cooking. He and his roommates invited a bunch of us to brunch. I didn't like just milling around, so I headed for the kitchen and cooked Julia Child scrambled eggs for the assembled hoards. I knew how to do this because I had learned to cook in a Radcliffe Coop and had rarely cooked for fewer than 30. Apparently my scrambled eggs were extraordinary. I was asked to cook a meal for Mickey and his roommates. After that we lived together.

Those early years we shopped and cooked together. Mickey wanted things clean once in a while. I wanted occasional order. These requirements were pretty minimal. Our senior year in medical school for about five months, our dinner consisted of chicken or beef cooked in an eternal soup. When we did cook, we were extravagant, colluding on elaborate French meals.

Our internships were every other night, every other weekend. From about November to May, when we finally ran out of toilet paper, we never went to the grocery store. We would get bagels sometimes on our every other Saturday afternoon off. My hospital's food was better than Mickey's so we ate most of our meals there. When Mickey was on the emergency room, and I off, one night I brought an electric frying pan, wine in a spice jar, chicken, vegetables, and cooked for the ER staff.

We moved to Washington, D.C., Mickey to do research and I to do my residency and chief residency years. We had two children. I nursed both children, never took any extra time off. Mickey and I shopped together before my rounds on Saturday morning; Mickey cooked and brought me elaborate dinners every night I was on call. We had cloth diapers, which we washed. I have no memory of how anything else got done. We returned to Boston for Mickey to do his residency in neurology. By then, Esther, my mother's older sister, was our childcare giver. I worked, took flute lessons on my afternoon off, practiced in the morning before work, and around the kids' needs when I was home and waiting for Mickey to arrive. I did cook during that time. Somebody else cleaned.

We returned to Washington, D.C., Mickey to research and me to practice. Mickey did morning child transport and child to pediatrician. I worked longer and longer hours. The house always had guests—short- or long-term. Mickey did most of the shopping and cooking, when other people weren't cooking. A series of "house-children," guests usually in their 20s, lived with us for months to years and helped with cooking and other household tasks. I was in-house psychotherapist as well as chief of fabric and dish management. That until last November when I, at least temporarily, stopped working.

We find that in addition to the above we have naturally divided who does what:

Repairs	Mickey
Banking, taxes, investment choices	Mickey
Children's camp arrangements	Debbie
Event planning	Debbie
Lawn	alas, no one voluntarily
Swimming pool and hot tub	Mickey
Travel and entertainment	Mickey
Cleaning up dog and people messes	Mickey
House/children management	Debbie

In fact, we've had a remarkably egalitarian marriage. Indeed, Mickey has consistently done more that I have in recent years. His support has enabled my professional life. In the months since I haven't been working, it has given me great pleasure to show him my appreciation and finally to do more of my share.

Deborah B. Goldberg is a primary-care internist starting a new home-based behavioral medicine practice in Washington, D.C.

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT BEN STILLER

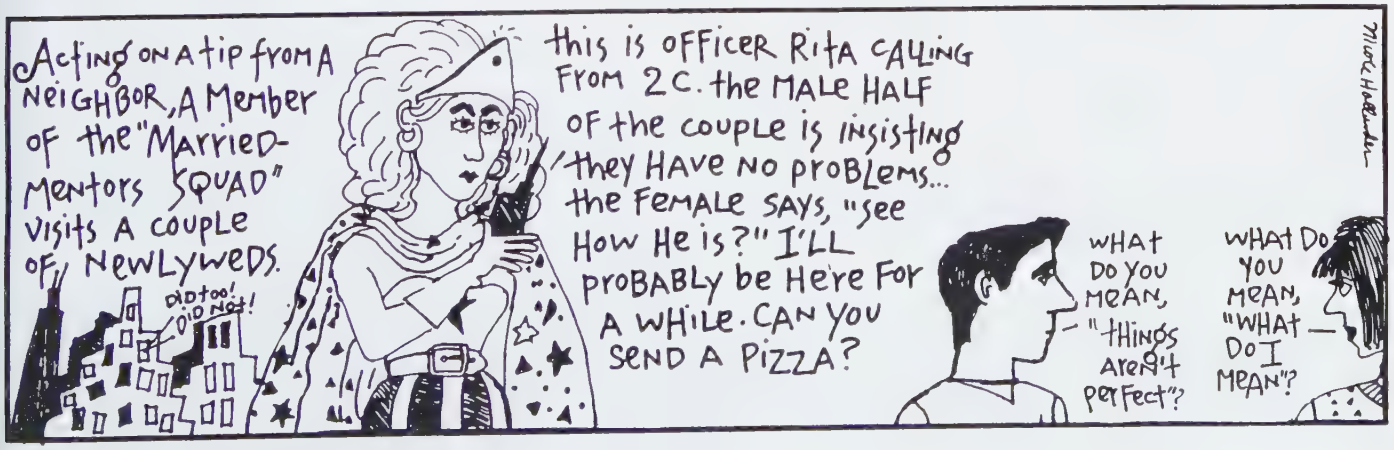
by Ophira Edut

I have a Yom Kippur fantasy. God has just inscribed me in the Book of Life and, as a bonus, adds, "Ophi, pick a fine Jewish man and he's yours."

I close my eyes and whisper, "I choose Ben Stiller." Bring me the high forehead and furry back, the rock-cut facial asymmetry. Deliver, O Lord, the klutzy sex appeal, tempered by a pinch of schlemieldom. Big Ben can ring my bell.

Last summer, he almost did. On a whim, a few friends and I signed up to be extras in "Keeping the Faith," a new movie in which Ben stars as a hip, young rabbi. Faced with an unresponsive congregation, Reb Stiller turns his sermons into comic improv, and even invites a gospel choir to rock the house with a sassy soul rendition of *Ein Keloheinu*. As an extra, I helped fill the seats of Congregation B'nai Jeshurun for a mock High Holiday service.

Ben and I were separated only by a balcony and a *bima*. And although we never spoke, I walked out on him within an hour.


Acting on a tip from a neighbor, a member of the "Married-Mentors Squad" visits a couple of newlyweds.
DID too! DID NOT!
this is Officer Rita calling from 2C. the male half of the couple is insisting they have no problems... the female says, "see how he is?" I'll probably be here for a while. can you send a pizza?
what do you mean, "things aren't perfect"?
what do you mean, "what — do I mean"?
Mark Hallinan

BAD GIRL CHATS
MALE ANIMALS ARE DRIVEN TO FATHER AS MANY OFFSPRING AS POSSIBLE, WHILE FEMALES WANT TO PRODUCE THE BEST OFF-SPRING POSSIBLE.
TRANS-LATING THIS TO HUMAN BEHAVIOR...
©1999 by Nicole Hollander Dist by Los Angeles Times Syndicate
www.suba.com/~sylvia
WE WASTED A LOT OF TIME LOOK-ING IN THE MIRROR...
WHEN WE SHOULD HAVE BEEN CHECKING THEIR TEETH.

You see, "Keeping the Faith"—and my flirtation with Hollywood—has a subplot of betrayal. In the movie, Rabbi Ben's childhood chum (Ed Norton) grows up to become a priest. And they're tighter than Jacob and Esau until a girl from their past (Jenna Elfman) makes a surprise appearance. She's tall, she's bony, she's blond. And guess what? The rabbi and the priest both want her.

So—the rabbi's ultimate goal is to get the blond waif and convince his congregation to accept their cross-cultural love? Well, yes.

Perhaps it hit too close to home. At 26, I've got as many bedpost notches as years on the planet. Yet, I've only dated one Jewish man. I'd be happy to add more to the list, but few have ever seemed attracted to me. I've often wondered if the reason is physical. Like many Jewish women, I'm short, thick and full-featured. I refuse to diet or get plastic surgery because I like myself the way I am. But are my curves a turnoff to Jewish guys? Other times, I've wondered if I have too much attitude for some Jewish guys to handle.

I'd be a hypocrite to say intercultural relationships bother me. But as seldom as Hollywood makes an overtly Jewish movie, the cliché disappointed me. Did they doubt that Jewish women can be sexy, attractive, loveable, beautiful and worthy of a fine Jewish man's pursuit?

Though it was just a movie, I felt betrayed. As a Jewish woman, this sadly familiar script was telling me that I wasn't good enough for a top-of-the-line Jewish guy—my dream guy, to boot! Rabbi Ben needed to win the *shiksa* in order to become a hero.

I couldn't stick around for the coronation. While the extras assumed their swooning position, I blew that movie set like a shofar on Rosh Hashanah.

That was my last encounter with Ben Stiller. I'll probably see "Keeping the Faith" at the dollar show, just to give him one more chance. Still, if God ever does offer me a fine Jewish man, I'm asking for movie rights instead. That way, I can write the script.

Ophira Edut edits the web site "Babes in Goyland" (www.ophira.com/jewgirl) and is the director of an upcoming women's online community.

A RIDDLE FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM

by Rabbi Jane Rachel Litman

My eight year old son Asher was waving his arm, bouncing up off his seat. "Please call on me. I know the answer. Pleeeeze!" It was lunchtime at his Jewish camp, and while the kids ate, they played riddles.

This particular day the counselor told a feminist classic: "A boy and his father were in a automobile accident. The father was unconscious. The boy was also very badly hurt and rushed to the hospital. In the emergency room the doctor, already masked and gloved, looks at the boy and says, 'I can't operate on this child. He's my son.'" Becca pauses dramatically, then asks, "Who is the doctor?"

If you haven't heard it, the usual answer is "his mother." But there was Asher waving. "Please...call on me." Becca called on Asher. Asher proudly stood up and announced: "It's his co-dad!"

I don't quite know what to make of this answer. Jokingly, I refer to it as the triumph of diversity over feminism. On one hand, I feel proud. For the past eight years I've been serving gay outreach congregations. I'm glad my son can easily picture a family with two fathers. But I'm a bit disconcerted that the picture of a family with multiple dads comes more quickly to my son's mind than that of a woman doctor. Remember, Asher's mom is a rabbi! In fact, his doctor is a woman (and his aunt is a doctor too).

Here it is, the turn of the secular millennium. We've come a very long way in the 25 years of the Jewish women's movement. Our synagogues and communities are far more accepting of alternative families. This acceptance is clearly a desirable result of the consciousness-raising and active organizing that we, Jewish feminists, have spearheaded.

It's progress I see in my home, where my kids are comfortable with their multiracial cousins and lesbian godmother. My home is a haven where I don't worry about the ever-present hum of gender politics. My [male] partner and I take for granted those early feminist insights about division of labor, intimacy and communication. My children still can't really distinguish between "mommy" and "daddy" and use them interchangeably for both of us.

But there is a stormy world outside. The Jewish community hasn't made quite the quantum leap in women's equality that it has in diversity acceptance. Recently I was at a funeral at which a male colleague of mine (not much older than I) officiated. The son of the deceased, a congregant of mine for a number of years and a self-proclaimed "radical," came up to me after the funeral. "Now that's my picture of a real rabbi," he said. "He looks just like my *zayde*." Just like my son's picture of a doctor—that is, male.

Jane Rachel Litman is the Rabbi Educator of Congregation Beth El in Berkeley, California. She specializes in religious education for alternative families, and co-edited Lifecycles 2 *(Jewish Lights).*

continued on page 27

AND UNDER YOUR ROOF...

As you read this, the organized Jewish community is busily compiling its millennial American Jewish Population Survey, trying to find out just what this community looks like and cares about. If the last survey, from 1990, is any indication, several key areas of our experience will go uninvestigated: familial relationships, domestic labor, feminism in Judaism—and other subjects that help reveal important things about the texture of our lives. With this survey, we hope to understand those areas better, and to reflect your experiences. So when the papers run the "story of the American Jewish community," LILITH, with your responses, will be able to tell the *rest* of the story.

Why answer these questions? First and foremost, because the Jewish community's studies generally don't ask about gender and about our closest relationships. This is the chance to have *your* choices and experiences be counted. We'll publish our collective portrait in an upcoming issue. And of course your responses will help us to publish about the topics you care about most....

While we've tried to reflect many life choices below, we know you have others on your mind. Please feel free to take up the margin space to let us know how you really feel. And when you're done—this is key—seal it up and send it back. Thanks, and our best wishes for a liberating century! —*Sarah Blustain*

DOMESTIC LIVES & LABOR

1. In addition to myself, my household consists of:

relation	age

2. If you have children, who would you say has the most responsibility for them?

- ☐ I do
- ☐ My partner does
- ☐ Someone else does
- ☐ n/a (not applicable)

3. Among your children, are there those who are

- ☐ Biological
- ☐ Adopted
- ☐ Foster children
- ☐ n/a

4. Did you undergo fertility treatments in order to have children? yes no n/a

5. Have you ever given a child up for adoption?
yes no n/a

6. Are you responsible for the care of an elderly person?
yes no
Relationship?_____

7. Has your immediate family been affected by someone's having responsibility for an older person? yes no n/a

8. Which of these statements best describe your relationship with food
(check all that apply)

- ☐ I am always dieting
- ☐ I diet frequently
- ☐ I worry about what I eat
- ☐ I read labels on packaged foods for content
- ☐ I can describe everything I have eaten in the past 5 days
- ☐ I eat healthfully
- ☐ I eat whatever I want
- ☐ I keep kosher

9. Who in your household usually

	I do	partner	both of us	child	parent	other	no one	it varies
shops for groceries								
makes meals								
serves the meal								
clears the table								
says Kiddush								
lights Shabbat candles								
pays the bills								
plans family vacations								
calls the babysitter								
calls the relatives								
makes social plans								

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

10. Relationship status

- ☐ married/committed
- ☐ single, never married
- ☐ single, divorced
- ☐ widowed
- ☐ remarried
- ☐ other
- ☐ n/a

11. Is this the relationship status you wish to have at this time? yes no n/a

12. Are you satisfied with your current relationship status

Sexually? yes no n/a
Financially? yes no n/a
Intellectually? yes no n/a
In terms of domestic labor? yes no n/a

13. Do you identify as

- ☐ lesbian/gay
- ☐ heterosexual
- ☐ bisexual
- ☐ other _____

14. If you are in a relationship, right now, is your partner Jewish? yes no

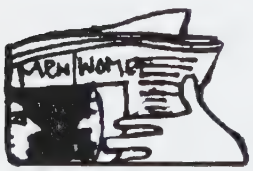
UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL (cont.)

15. How did you meet your current partner?

- ☐ at synagogue
- ☐ at a Jewish holiday celebration
- ☐ at a Jewish singles event
- ☐ at another kind of singles event
- ☐ through friends
- ☐ in college
- ☐ through a dating service/personal ad
- ☐ at a bar
- ☐ other _____

16. If you are single right now, do you date

- ☐ only Jews
- ☐ preferably Jews
- ☐ religion doesn't matter
- ☐ preferably someone outside my religion



17. Which of these statements, if any best reflects your feelings about marrying a Jewish man or a Jewish woman:

- ☐ "I'd rather not."
- ☐ "I'd like to marry Jewish but I'm happy dating 'out.'"
- ☐ "If I could only find one..."
- ☐ "My parents would be thrilled!"
- ☐ n/a
- ☐ _____

18. At what age did you first have (if applicable)

sexual intercourse _____

a wedding _____

a baby _____

19. If you were to get married this week, would you change your last name to that of your partner? yes no n/a

SPIRIT AND CELEBRATION

20. I've participated in these women-oriented Jewish activities:

	regularly	sporadically	once or twice	never
Rosh Chodesh group				
Women's tefillah group				
All-women's Torah study				
Mikveh				
Simchat Chochma/Croning Ceremony/Ceremony of Wisdom				
Feminist seder				
Menarche ceremony				
Weaning ceremony				
Simchat Bat				
A healing ceremony				

21. In which other Jewish activities do you regularly participate (check all that apply)

- ☐ light Shabbat candles
- ☐ go to synagogue on the High Holidays
- ☐ belong to a synagogue
- ☐ attend synagogue more than once a month
- ☐ make a Passover seder
- ☐ lead a Passover seder
- ☐ build a sukkah
- ☐ practice Jewish meditation
- ☐ study Jewish texts alone, in a group or at a school
- ☐ Jewish cultural activities
- ☐ Israeli dancing
- ☐ pray regularly alone
- ☐ give charity
- ☐ visit the sick/bikkur cholim
- ☐ read Lilith
- ☐ other _____

22. My synagogue service of choice is/would be:

- ☐ Orthodox
- ☐ Conservative
- ☐ traditional egalitarian
- ☐ Reform
- ☐ Reconstructionist
- ☐ Renewal
- ☐ non-affiliated congregation
- ☐ havurah
- ☐ other _____

23. Is Judaism your religion of birth? yes no

24. Do you participate in the religious ceremonies or worship of other faiths? yes no

25. If yes, which religion(s)

_____

_____

26. I would describe the gender balance in *leadership* at my synagogue as

- ☐ too male-dominated
- ☐ too female-dominated
- ☐ just right
- ☐ n/a

27. I would describe the gender balance in ritual *participation* at my synagogue as

- ☐ too male-dominated
- ☐ too female-dominated
- ☐ just right
- ☐ n/a

28. In my worship/observance I (check any that apply):

- ☐ wear a kippah
- ☐ wear a tallit
- ☐ wear tefillin
- ☐ read Torah
- ☐ have an aliyah
- ☐ say kaddish (when appropriate)
- ☐ attend an egalitarian synagogue/minyan

29. Last year LILITH ran an article entitled "Shabbat Without Shopping Carts" about a super-mom who designed her own sabbath rules. If you could create your own Shabbat, what three "freedoms from..." or "freedoms to..." would make it most restful for you?

_____

_____

_____

30. Which of the following groups do you think need more attention from Jewish communities and synagogues? (check all that apply)

- ☐ the sick or bed-ridden
- ☐ the disabled
- ☐ single parents
- ☐ childless singles
- ☐ gays and lesbians
- ☐ elders
- ☐ children
- ☐ teenage boys
- ☐ teenage girls
- ☐ men
- ☐ women
- ☐ other _____

31. Some people set out a cup of Miriam or an orange on their seder plate as a symbol of women's renewed place in Judaism. Do you have either?

yes no n/a

32. Who is a female biblical figure who comes to mind as a POSITIVE character?

_____

33. Who is female biblical figure who comes to mind as a NEGATIVE character?

_____

34. Who is a biblical character (of any gender!) with whom you identify?

_____

35. Would your high school friends consider you more religious than you were growing up? yes no n/a

36. Are you raising your children (or planning to raise them) as Jewish?

yes no n/a

GIRLS GIRLS GIRLS

During this year, LILITH is launching a project on Jewish American girlhood. We would like to know your thoughts...

37. When you were a girl, which of the following were positive formative experiences for you *as a Jew*?

- ☐ Hebrew school
- ☐ Jewish summer camp
- ☐ youth group (name of group _____)
- ☐ trip to Israel
- ☐ other _____

38. Which were positive formative experiences for you *as a girl*?

- ☐ Hebrew school
- ☐ Jewish summer camp
- ☐ youth group (name of group _____)
- ☐ trip to Israel
- ☐ other _____

39. What areas should be addressed in programs for teen girls? (Please check your top three choices.)

- ☐ mother/daughter relationships
- ☐ academic stress/ perfectionism
- ☐ sports
- ☐ self-defense
- ☐ body image/eating disorder
- ☐ "JAP" images and other negative stereotypes
- ☐ Jewish texts
- ☐ Jewish culture
- ☐ social activities
- ☐ intergroup relations (black-Jewish for instance)
- ☐ Social action/tikkun olam
- ☐ money
- ☐ sex and dating
- ☐ career goals
- ☐ other _____

40. What's the best program—ongoing or one-time—for teenage girls that you know of?

_____

EXTRA-CURRICULARS

41. Do you belong to any Jewish women's organizations? yes no

42. If yes, which ones?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

43. Do you volunteer your time to (check all that apply)

- ☐ general Jewish organizations
- ☐ Jewish women's organizations
- ☐ general women's organizations
- ☐ other
- ☐ n/a

44. Have you experienced sexist attitudes or incidents during your participation in Jewish organizations?

- ☐ often
- ☐ sometimes
- ☐ never
- ☐ n/a

45. What is your most significant free-time activity?

_____

_____

ON LILITH

46. Which articles in this issue did you read first?

_____

_____

_____

47. Are there subjects you would like to see covered in the future?

_____

_____

_____

ON FEMINISM

48. Do you consider yourself a feminist

- ☐ yes, definitely
- ☐ depends who's asking
- ☐ no

49. Do you consider the significant men in your life to be feminists? yes no n/a

50. How do you express your feminism? (check all that apply)

- ☐ I vote for women candidates
- ☐ I mentor women/girls

- ☐ I bring up my children with a feminist consciousness
- ☐ I support feminist organizations financially
- ☐ I volunteer at feminist organizations
- ☐ In my attitude
- ☐ I read LILITH
- Other _____
- ☐ I don't

51. How do girls and young women generally react when you use the word "feminism"?

- ☐ very positively
- ☐ somewhat positively
- ☐ neutral
- ☐ somewhat negatively
- ☐ very negatively
- ☐ n/a

52. What do you think?

a. Women today have the opportunity to be equal with men in Jewish religious institutions/synagogue life.

b. Women today have the opportunity to be equal with men in the Jewish organizational world.

c. Women today have the opportunity to be equal with men in the working world.

d. Women today have the opportunity to be equal with men in the home.

e. Judaism can never overcome its patriarchal past.

strongly agree	agree	somewhat agree	somewhat disagree	disagree	strongly disagree

the WAY you LIVE

In the sometimes hectic pace of life, what do you have time for? We're interested in your day-to-day activities.

53. Do you buy from mail order catalogues? yes no

54. Do you buy kosher food?
yes no

55. What are your favorite magazines?

_____

_____

_____

56. Approximately how many books do you a read a year?

- ☐ 1-20
- ☐ 21-40
- ☐ more than 40

the BASIC BIO

57. Age _____

58. Gender M F

59. Educational level_____

WANNA TALK MORE?

Name _____

Phone _____

e-mail _____

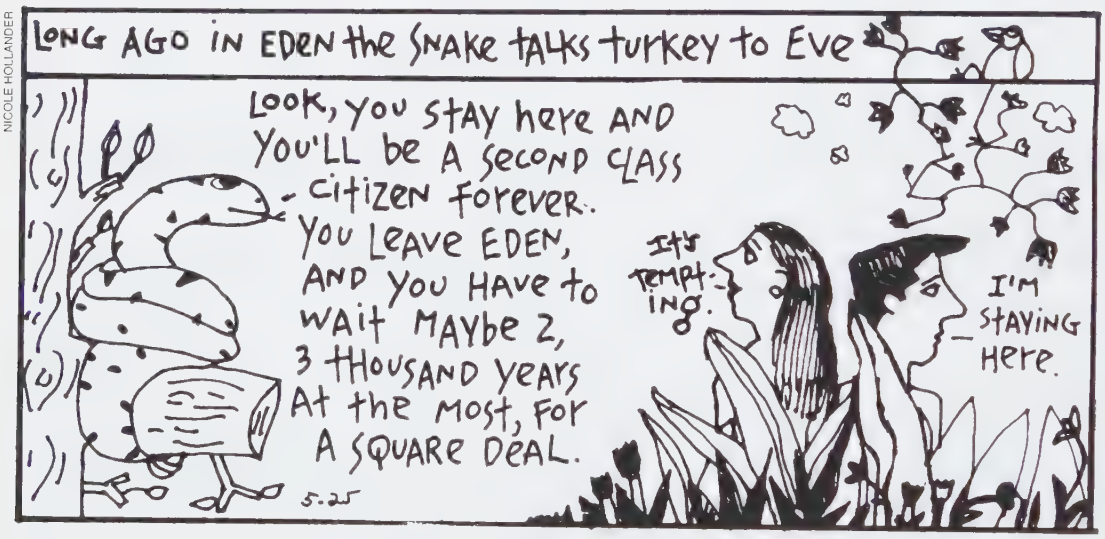
60. Employment status

- ☐ employed full time
- ☐ employed part time
- ☐ unemployed
- ☐ retired
- ☐ a student
- ☐ n/a

61. What is your household income?

- ☐ under $25,000
- ☐ $26,000-$50,000
- ☐ $51,000-$100,000
- ☐ over $100,000

NICOLE HOLLANDER


LONG AGO IN EDEN the SNAKE talks turkey to Eve
LOOK, YOU STAY here AND YOU'LL be A SECOND CLASS - CITIZEN FOREVER. YOU LEAVE EDEN, AND YOU HAVE to WAIT MAYBE 2, 3 THOUSAND YEARS AT the MOST, FOR A SQUARE DEAL.
5-25
IT'S TEMPTING.
I'M STAYING HERE.

Nicole Hollander is a nationally syndicated cartoonist whose work has previously graced the cover of LILITH. To see more of her work, check out her web site at www.nicolehollander.com.

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The Jewish Feminist Alternative

continued from page 22

"Pretend I'm dead," I tell him

by Letty Cottin Pogrebin

Over the last three decades, women have won many legal victories in the public sphere but in our private lives, we remain miles away from gender equality.

Nevertheless, if my children's generation of thirtysomethings are representative of young, educated, middle-class, Jewish, heterosexual, co-habiting couples (what a mouthful), we are witnessing a seismic change in at least one area of domestic life—fathering.

Both my sons-in-law, Edward and Dave, are intensely involved in their children's lives (each has two kids under the age of three), not because of some theoretical commitment to equality but as a gut-level, spontaneous, ongoing expression of love. My daughters, Robin and Abigail, work full time, and when they get home they're just as tired as their husbands and just as eager to spend time with their kids. These daddies know the routine as well as the mommies, and they swing into gear without those maddening questions that make women feel we might as well be doing it ourselves. ("Where are the diapers/forks/shampoo?")

Abigail and Robin appreciate their husbands but don't make a federal case out of every caring gesture. Having been well-fathered themselves, they take this behavior for granted. From my husband Bert's example they've gleaned an ideal of good fathering that extends far beyond a man's willingness to watch TV with his kids or shout, "Great catch!" on the weekends. It presupposes a thorough hands-on familiarity with the minutia of his children's lives.

To test for this elusive quality, ask all the dads you know: Can you name your kids' three closest friends; their most and least favorite book, toy, food, activity; their shoe sizes? Do they ever call your name when they wake up in the night? When was the last time you comforted them when they cried? What's the longest period of time you've spent alone with your child without the buffer of their mother's presence or the distraction of an outside event?

Though my husband's fathering style was rather remarkable for our generation, it's quite commonplace among our children's peers for whom the ideology of egalitarian childrearing roles is one of feminism's most meaningful legacy. Unfortunately, the workplace and other social institutions have not kept pace with this change, so it's still hard for fathers to take parental leave or otherwise integrate their family responsibilities into their work lives. But young men are trying. And young women are ceding the emotional power that used to accrue to mothers almost automatically.

This doesn't mean that everything in the domestic sphere is perfectly egalitarian. In our house, for instance, my husband can still say in a surprised tone, "Hey, there's no milk!" And my sense is that young women are still hearing similar exclamations from the men in their lives which suggests that, though guys may be willing to share the household tasks, the responsibility of remembering and noticing still falls predominantly on us.

What to do about it? Sometimes, when my husband becomes domestically challenged I like to reply, "Pretend I'm dead," by which I mean, "If I weren't around, you'd notice the milk was running low." But the truth is he probably wouldn't. I tend to notice such things and he doesn't—until he hankers after a bowl of Cheerios, encounters a milk-less fridge and has to eat the cereal dry.

Unless I were to mount a campaign of not-noticing (which I'm congenitally incapable of doing), it will continue to be Old Supermom who remembers, makes the lists and issues the instructions—as I've done for the last 36 years—while my husband holds up his end by cheerfully doing whatever I ask. This may not add up to perfect symmetry, but when all else is functioning well in a marriage, and when a woman's heart is warmed by her husband's fathering, even the most rabid feminist learns to compromise.

Letty Cottin Pogrebin is a founding editor of Ms. and the author of eight books including Deborah, Golda and Me. *She is at work on her first novel.*

A Farewell to Pantyhose

by Heidi Gralla

For the first three years of our marriage, my husband and I had the perfect egalitarian household. We made all our financial decisions together. And we never argued over housework; we simply paid others to do it. A cleaning woman scrubbed our apartment, the laundromat down the street washed our clothes, and Manhattan's vast array of eateries cooked most of our meals. (Our *ketubah* actually mentions the importance of take-out menus.)

That all changed with the birth of our daughter Rachel two years ago. I quit my job as a magazine editor and overnight became the one thing I'd swore I'd never become: a housewife. (My mother still talks about the time I was six years old and I announced I'd have a househusband). These days, I do well over 50% of the housework and earn no paycheck. Not exactly a feminist's dream.

And yet, I feel fulfilled and liberated. Most of my time is spent doing the same things that women before me have done for centuries, but I'm lucky enough to be doing this by choice. It also helps that on an average weeknight, my husband often makes or orders dinner—we still use those take-out menus a lot—gives Rachel a bath, cuts her fingernails, changes at least one diaper and reads her bedtime stories. Still, he tends to feel a bit like a hero for doing all this hands-on fathering, since his friends do less.

The initial decision to quit my job turned out to be easier than I'd anticipated: The day I quit my job, I changed out of my suit, put on my comfy "mommy" clothes—jeans and a sweatshirt—and happily threw out the perfectly good pair of pantyhose I'd been wearing. Two days later, panic set in. I felt like I'd thrown away a professional identity I'd spent years cultivating. How could my husband possibly have the same respect for me that he'd had when I had a career? Would he still consider me his intellectual equal?

Those fears turned out to be unfounded. My husband has watched with apparent fascination as I've taken all the energy I once applied to my career and channeled it into my new role. I will go back to my career, but for now, the challenges at home are as stimulating as the ones I faced in my office. Although I no longer earn a paycheck, my husband and I continue to share all our financial decisions. He and I discuss everything together, but he treats me like an expert on a lot of family matters. And because I'm the expert, my vote carries more weight.

I still feel we have an egalitarian household, though my definition of it has changed a lot. Where I once felt equality was defined by the division of labor in the home, I now see it as a question of power. Of course, as any parent of a two year old knows, that makes Rachel the most liberated person in our house. ■

Heidi Gralla is a freelance writer living in New York.

sara shandler speaks

Q: Girls don't do 'girl talk'?

A: No, we do, but we know the right answers. 'Do you like your b

One afternoon this fall, best-selling author Sara Shandler, a college sophomore, took off from school at Wesleyan University for a whirlwind day in New York City. Her morning appointment took her for a glamour photo shoot at Cosmo Girl—complete with stylists, rock music and fake fur stoles—one of the many star moments she's had since her book by and about teenage girls, *Ophelia Speaks,* shot onto The New York Times paperback bestseller list. Her book (HarperPerennial, $12.95), culled from first-person accounts of teenage girls around the country, gives human voice to the troubles outlined in Mary Pipher's landmark book *Reviving Ophelia* and traces the troubled life of American girls. A dramatic portrait of anxiety, low self-esteem and super-human efforts toward self-perfection emerges as these girls write to Shandler about sex, drugs, eating disorders, academic stress, parental pressures and more.

Following her Cosmo glam-session, Shandler, a former president of the B'nai B'rith Youth Organization chapter for the Connecticut Valley Region, stopped in at the LILITH office for a chat about these issues, before dinner with her sister and a return to campus life. The conversation, excerpted below, took place between Shandler, LILITH intern **Susannah Jaffe,** herself a sophomore at Barnard College, and our associate editor **Sarah Blustain.**

blustain: Was there a personal crisis that got you reading *Reviving Ophelia*?

shandler: When I was about 15 and 16, I was terribly, terribly unhappy. I was really depressed, looking back on it. I wouldn't have said it then, but I was. And then I was sort of able to come out the other side and have a little wisdom because of it, with a lot of time and effort. I actually didn't read *Reviving Ophelia* until I was about to turn 17, but it was still good to read and say, "Hey—that was me. That is me. That's everybody that I know, in different ways."

blustain: What does your book say that *Reviving Ophelia* didn't?

shandler: I think it really shows a strength that *Reviving Ophelia* didn't. The strength of character of girls, their ability to articulate their experiences, and a real hope for their futures, and a real intelligence that didn't come across [in *Reviving Ophelia*].

blustain: When I was reading the book, it seemed like these girls were forever striving to improve themselves in every way—to become thinner, more popular, more loved by their boyfriends, academically successful. I was amazed at the whole attitude—to be more, better, faster.

shandler: I think you really put your finger on it. I think, more than anything else, that's the real over-arching theme. Basically, I think the root of that is that [we feel] we're just not good enough.

jaffe: I definitely see it a lot. Everyone has their own ways which they want to be, and they strive to be that weight, or level of happiness, or academic standing. Girls try to be the "perfect package." Even though you're striving with all of these things, and have 8,000 issues going on inside you, you still look and act perfect, and nobody ever knows.

shandler: For the *Ophelia Speaks* proposal, I just asked my friends to give me writing. It was amazing to me how little I knew about my friends. But at the same time, when I was depressed, no one knew. I was doing better in school, I was working out every day, eating well, had a boyfriend, had my friends. I seemed like a very normal, happy teenager. But inside, every day lasted forever, and all I wanted to do was sleep. So, I had seen my friends as they had seen me. It was really unbelievable to me, because I just saw them as these pretty, popular, good-at-sports girls who were about to go to Harvard, Yale and Brown.

blustain: And girls don't do 'girl talk'?

shandler: No, [we do] but we know the right answers. 'Do you like your body?' 'Of course, every body is beautiful.' Who believes it? We all say it, because we know what we're supposed to say.

jaffe: You're also not mature enough to handle it. At that age, you're not able to pinpoint what's going on with you, much less discuss it with a group of friends. Even if you sort of realize that you have eating issues, or you're depressed, you never want to label it as such, because then you wouldn't be 'normal.'

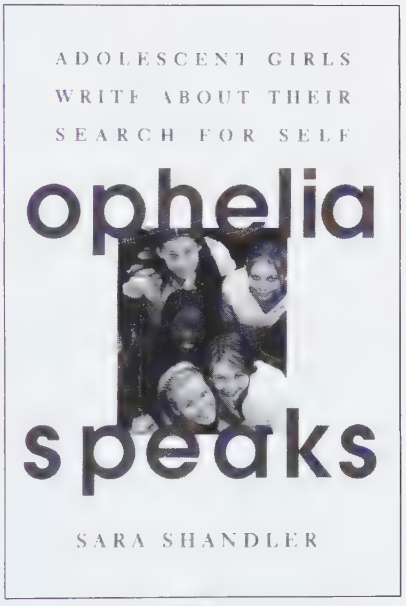
blustain: How do you think boys deal with these things?

jaffe: I never, ever wanted to deal with girls after sixth grade, and I didn't. I hung out with my brother and his friends, and had guy best friends. I think that they have different expectations in terms of fitting into little boxes. Girls are always categorized in certain ways, and you have to fit into your box and be the best in your box.

shandler: There still are a lot of boys who fall through the cracks, and it may be even worse for them. At least for girls who are having all these issues, we're *all* having all these issues. If a girl comes out and says she's depressed, it's okay—it's sort of a girly thing to do.

blustain: If there was something you could have asked of somebody at that period, what would you have asked?

shandler: I don't know. I knew that I was terribly, terribly unhappy, but I had no idea how to get better. Anything anyone would have told me, I just would have said 'great,' been sarcastic, and walked away.



jaffe: Everyone has their two- or three-year period of high school or middle school when they're like this. In mine, just knowing that there were other people like me [would have helped]. It's enough to be able to read and hear about girls your age, and to know that they were going through the same thing.

shandler: Just to know that you're not a total freak.

jaffe: Because you think you are. No one talks about it.

shandler: That's one of the things I hoped to do with *Ophelia Speaks*, to break through that isolation. I think almost everyone is [depressed in high school]. It's like an adolescent rite of passage. You don't have to be, but that's what it's become.

blustain: What's the role of smartness in all of this?

shandler: Pretty big. There is a lot of pressure, and I think that there's something to being the best you can be. There's also something to just accepting that the best isn't the only way. If you had told that to me my junior year in high school, when I had anxiety about what college I was going to go to, I would have stepped on your toes and punched you in the head. It's not what I wanted to hear then. In my experience, Jewish girls tend to be really smart. Once you start doing well, at a certain point, you're expected to keep doing well.

jaffe: Especially with Jewish girls, there's not only the pressure to strive and be the best, and to be smarter and go to the best school, but you also have to find a nice Jewish boy. You have to be the best and do this and do that, but by the way, are you dating anyone? I had this conversation with my grandmother over the summer, and I was all excited, telling her about my successful first year at college, and I was telling her about the magazine, and my articles, and she literally stopped me in the middle and said, "So have you met any boys?" My Jewish friends totally have that same experience.

blustain: The thing that really struck me reading your book is that these girls are really alone.

shandler: I think that it's absolutely true. If adults try to get involved and intervene, the answer they're most likely to get back is, 'No, Mommy and Daddy, I'm fine—I promise. I'm under a lot of pressure, but I'm fine.'

jaffe: I think parents should have some sort of a decoder ring. When you say, 'I'm totally fine,' you really want them to know that you're not, but you don't want to say it. My parents always asked me if I was okay, and I'd say 'yeah,' and they'd say 'great' and walk away, because it was what they wanted to hear. Even when there were huge neon signs above my bed, nothing happened.

When I was 16, my mom found my diet pills something like three times in the span of four months. Every time:

'Susannah, are these yours?'

'No.'

'Okay.'

There should be a dictionary. What does 'fine' really mean? You can look it up and see that 'fine' means that she wants to go to a therapist.

shandler: Most girls that age aren't willing to say 'I have a problem.' Just saying 'I need help' is a huge step. [Among the responses for *Ophelia Speaks*], a lot of them came with cover letters saying, 'this was really therapeutic for me,' and I think for a lot of them it was just sort of that.

jaffe: And I'm sure that half of your cover letters said, like,

continued on page 40

e?' 'Of course every body is beautiful.' But who believes it? We say it because we know what we're supposed to say.

How Najeeb Are You?

REFLECTIONS ON PERSIAN-AMERICAN GIRLHOOD

BY PEGAH HENDIZADEH SCHIFFMAN

"The rules of virginity were unspoken until one day when

"On the Other Side of a Glance" by Reza De Rakshani, a Persian-American artist and musician. (212) 828-8846

In Farsi, the language spoken in Iran, there is a word: *najeeb*. This means pure and virginal, and Persian girls are told they must meet these standards to maintain the value of their families. There are no rules, however, regarding a man's purity.

Since the Iranian revolution in 1979, many Jewish families have settled in the United States, mostly in Los Angeles, California, and on Long Island, New York. The children in these families may have a hard time balancing their Persian identity with their new American one. The girls, especially,

may find conflicts with what their parents consider to be important values versus what Americans generally do. Dating, premarital sex and marriage are explosive issues, particularly between parents and young women in their teens and 20s.

Recently I interviewed three Jewish women about how conflicts affected their lives as part of a cross-cultural study of Muslim, Baha'i and Jewish young women whose Iranian-born families had settled in the United States. All of their parents spent at least the early part of their lives in Iran and, therefore, were socialized as Persians. The women were all between 19 and 22 years old, were college students and live or have lived away from home—an unusual situation for Persian girls.

Listen to their words. Many of them express pain; at other times they look at their communities with varying amounts of sarcasm and respect. You may find some of their words offensive. They talked candidly and generously about gender roles, double standards, sex, curfews, alcohol, interracial dating, homosexuality, birth control, "husband material," careers, reputation, feminism, secrets and guilt. I'd like to thank all of the women who shared their souls with me and allowed me to feel their conflict.

ked my parents why I

Many of the tensions in their lives revolve around male/female relationships. These include the issues of premarital sex, marriage and interracial dating. Almost all of the women interviewed have parents who are homophobic. None of these women learned about feminism through their parents. They had to discover it on their own, and some have very negative connotations of the term. Most of these parents have higher and more specific expectations for their future sons-in-law rather than for their own daughters' careers. Some of these women lie to their parents on a regular basis in order to live their lives the way they want to.

Has leading this "double life" caused them trauma? Some young women admitted that they were not able to concentrate on schoolwork or other matters because they were worried all day that their parents were mad at them. Or perhaps they were feeling guilty about something they did or lied about. They felt that their mental energy was being consumed by what should be trivial matters.

What does this dual experience mean for the next generation of Persian-American women? Will they have to lead double lives? Will they allow their daughters to do openly what they themselves have had to hide from their parents? Will more openness mean compromising Persian traditions? Does Persian tradition leave room for feminism, or will these women always feel like they will have to choose between the two? There is no translation for the word "feminist" in Farsi, but perhaps the concept of *najeeb* can be replaced by a new concept of *"tarafdar hugug-e zanan"*—literally, an advocate for women's issues. Perhaps we can use this phrase until a word for "feminist" is created. Someday we'll find that word, because we have already found our voice.

The women

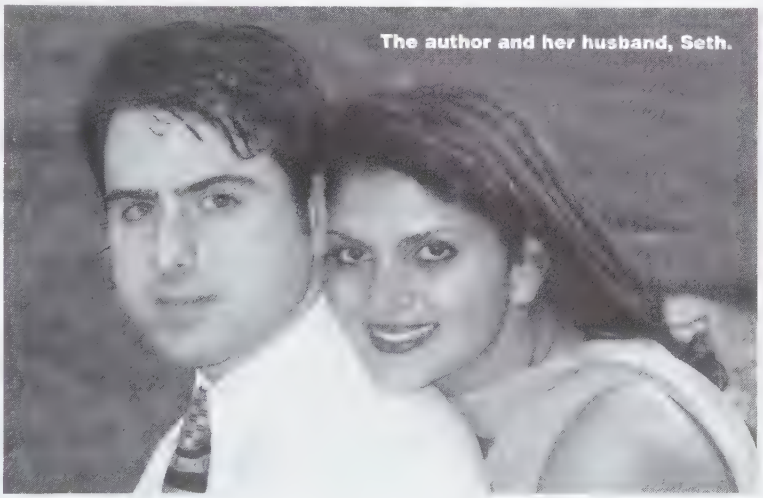
Mishana, 20, the middle child. Raised in Los Angeles. Both parents are Jewish. She was born in the United Sates. Her mother has been here for 25 years and her father has been here for 40 years. She has two brothers.

Shadi, 20, an only child. Raised in Los Angeles. Both parents are Jewish.

Rachel, 20, has one older brother. Raised on Long Island. Both parents are Jewish and have been in the United States for 17 years.

Can you talk about the gender roles and double standards in your family?

Mishana's brother is allowed to date someone out of his religion. In high school she was not allowed to date anybody. "Now, I am allowed to date to search for my husband. My brother presently has a girlfriend out of our religion who has a key to his apartment and answers the phone."


The author and her husband, Seth.

Nonetheless, she says, "my brother thinks I am favored because I am the only girl and because they buy me more material things [to make her more attractive to potential suitors]. One day my whole family spent the entire day looking for me to buy the perfect dress for my cousin's wedding."

Shadi has similar issues in her family. She is not allowed to date. "But if I were to, I am not allowed to say anything to anybody including my American friends because my parents feel that it will get around. When I am at a party or somebody's house, I am expected to go to into the kitchen and not act like a guest."

Rachel has the same difficulties. "There has been a complete double standard in my household which commenced when I hit puberty." Her brother was always allowed to stay out much later than she was and her parents didn't always keep tabs on where he was. "It was assumed that whomever I dated might be marriage material." Her parents always spent more money on her clothes and pressured her to wear fancier outfits to the Persian parties while her brother got to wear jeans if he wanted. The chores in the household pretty much got divided when she reached puberty as well. "It is important for me to know how to be a hostess, set the table, and of course, serve tea. My brother had to mow the lawn, do

Virgin, or Slut?

Two decades after the Iranian revolution, the children of Jewish refugees in America are coming of age. They have been raised in an old, patriarchal culture in their homes, and they have absorbed American values around them.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the conflicted sexuality of the community's young women, the subject of a documentary-in-progress by 25-year-old New Yorker Tanaz Eshaghian. Eshaghian, born in Iran and raised in the United States, is interviewing young women like herself, 23-27 years old, about how they view their own sexuality. Her efforts are bold in a culture that tends, she says, "to hide everything."

Among her questions for the women: How do they balance the Iranian expectation of virginity until marriage with American freer standards of sexuality? Is there a double standard in the treatment of boys and girls? How much guilt is associated with sex for these young women? And what, in their definition, makes someone a "slut"?

Eshaghian also plans to query others within the Iranian Jewish communities. As we went to press, she was flying off to Los Angeles in search of interviews with—among others—doctors who offer their services reconstructing hymens.

"If any Iranian girls that have suffered the consequences of breaking away from the community would like to participate in the documentary," comments Eshaghian, "please contact me." 212-529-0965; tanaze@earthlink.com.

—*SB*

the car stuff, and learn how to sit and watch TV while we [the women] cleaned up."

What were the rules your parents had regarding your virginity, boyfriends, male friends and curfews?

Mishana starts, "The rules of virginity were unspoken until one day when I asked my parents why I had to be a virgin and my brother didn't. They answered me by telling me I had something that could be broken whereas my brother had nothing to lose. If they found out I wasn't a virgin—not that I'm not a virgin—I think I would be mutilated."

When Shadi was 13 her father told her, "Virginity is a gift that you will give your husband on your wedding night." This value was not mentioned only once to her. "These virgin talks always seem to occur over dinner. They don't understand how I can get sick from this or become prejudiced from the food. This type of Indian food always reminds me of our sex talks." Still, Shadi had a secret boyfriend for eight months before her mom found out. "One day she came into my room and told me she needed to know the nature of our relationship. I told her we were boyfriend and girlfriend and she flipped out. She said "I hope you didn't go to bed with him." But at that point it was already too late. Her reaction made me feel dirty even though I knew I shouldn't feel that way. I even sometimes still do."

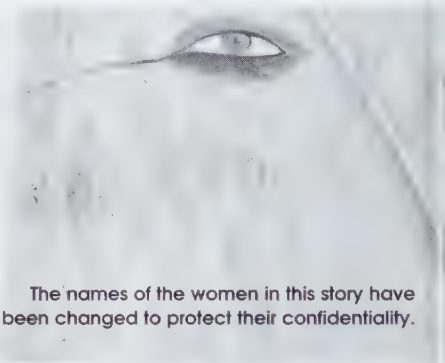
From the time Rachel knew about sex she knew she wasn't allowed to have it until she was married. Her virginity was also discussed at the dinner table. Her mom would always judge her friends on how *najeeb* they were. When Rachel was in seventh grade, her mother did not like one of her friends because she plucked her eyebrows. This was a sign to her that this girl was not pure. Now Rachel has been dating a guy for two years and is reminded about once a week that she is not allowed to have sex with him. "The funny thing is, he is 24, the same age as my brother. So if my brother is allowed to have sex, which he is, how come my boyfriend can't? Once in a while they ask how my boyfriend could handle not having sex. Was he normal? Was he gay? I'm thinking, what do they want from me? I'm damned if I do and damned if I don't."

Did your parents talk to you about birth control?

"My mom never told me what a period was, so she definitely never told me anything about birth control," said Mishana, reflecting the silence of all three mothers. "She did however tell me that if I used a tampon, I would be losing my virginity."

Are you allowed to date men from other races?

Interracial dating is not an option. Shadi comments, "If I were allowed to date he would have to be Persian, Jewish, rich, educated, and from a good family. That pretty much erases everybody of a different race, class, religion, nationality, gender." Rachel is definitely not allowed to date people of other races. "I wondered if I met an Ethiopian Jew what they would do?"



The names of the women in this story have been changed to protect their confidentiality.

Is there compulsory heterosexuality in the Persian culture?

Shadi believes so. "I know who I am supposed to date. When I go to a party, I have to have my legs waxed and my hair straightened." Rachel agrees, "I encounter tons of compulsory heterosexuality every time I go home or talk to them on the phone....I just got my senior photos and my parents said, the next time you have professional photos done, you will be wearing white. I don't have a choice of whether I want to get married or not. It's really stressful. Luckily I am in a very committed relationship with someone who I can see spending the rest of my life with. If I didn't, I know I would have to be dealing with *chastegars*." *Chastegars* are men who come to the house to court these women. "Usually," says Rachel, "it's 30-

year-old men courting 20-year-old women. The family gets totally involved and there is no privacy."

Once when Rachel was a freshman in college, a good female friend and she slept in the guest room together in a double bed and her parents got very angry. "I couldn't understand it. It's like they don't want me to have intimacy with anyone. At the time, I had a boyfriend, so they knew that I was at least interested in boys."

What do your parents hope for in a son-in-law?

The expectations are high—and specific. Mishana says, "They want me to come home after college and spend year with them so that I can be in *eshtemah* [Persian society]. This is so I can find a husband....He should be between four to six years older than me, Jewish, and come from a good family name. He has to be a professional and educated but they don't want a businessman."

Shadi's parents are just as specific. "My husband has to be older but not too much older (not more than 8 years). He has to be well-established, from a good family that is well off, very family-oriented, and well educated."

Rachel answered, "My parents definitely have set criteria for my husband. For them, the ideal husband must be at least four years older than me, preferably more, a doctor, tall, from a very good family that had no contact with the concept of divorce, Persian, Jewish, a wealthy background, and who can put a down payment on a house when we get married. If I found a guy like that, it would be ideal if I was engaged around the time of my college graduation."

Are the expectations as high for your careers as for your marriages?

It does not seem so. Mishana's parents want her to get a graduate degree but afterwards to stay home to take care of the kids. Once her children are grown, maybe she will have a career. Shadi's parents have similar views. "They don't encourage me to be a doctor like I want to be. They want me to be educated but they expect my husband to provide for me and for me to provide the primary care for my children." Rachel's parents' views conflict with one another. "My parents both expected me to go to college. My mother would be happy if I got my B.A., got married, had kids, and never had to work a day in my life. My father on the other hand wants me to get married, go to graduate school, and work but make my priority my children. "

Persian women have to deal with protecting their reputation and that of their family. How important is that to you?

Mishana starts by referring to the word for reputation in Farsi—*aberooh*. "I can't wear anything above mid thigh. [My parents] want me to dress in a more feminine manner. I have to find the perfect medium between slut and grandma. I can't be seen out in public with guys because the Persian community may see me. It's hell to be in L.A. and be Persian."

Rachel has similar problems. "My parents are very obsessed with my reputation. Not too many relatives outside of immediate family know about my boyfriend. If they did, my parents think that it will be spread around the whole Persian communi-

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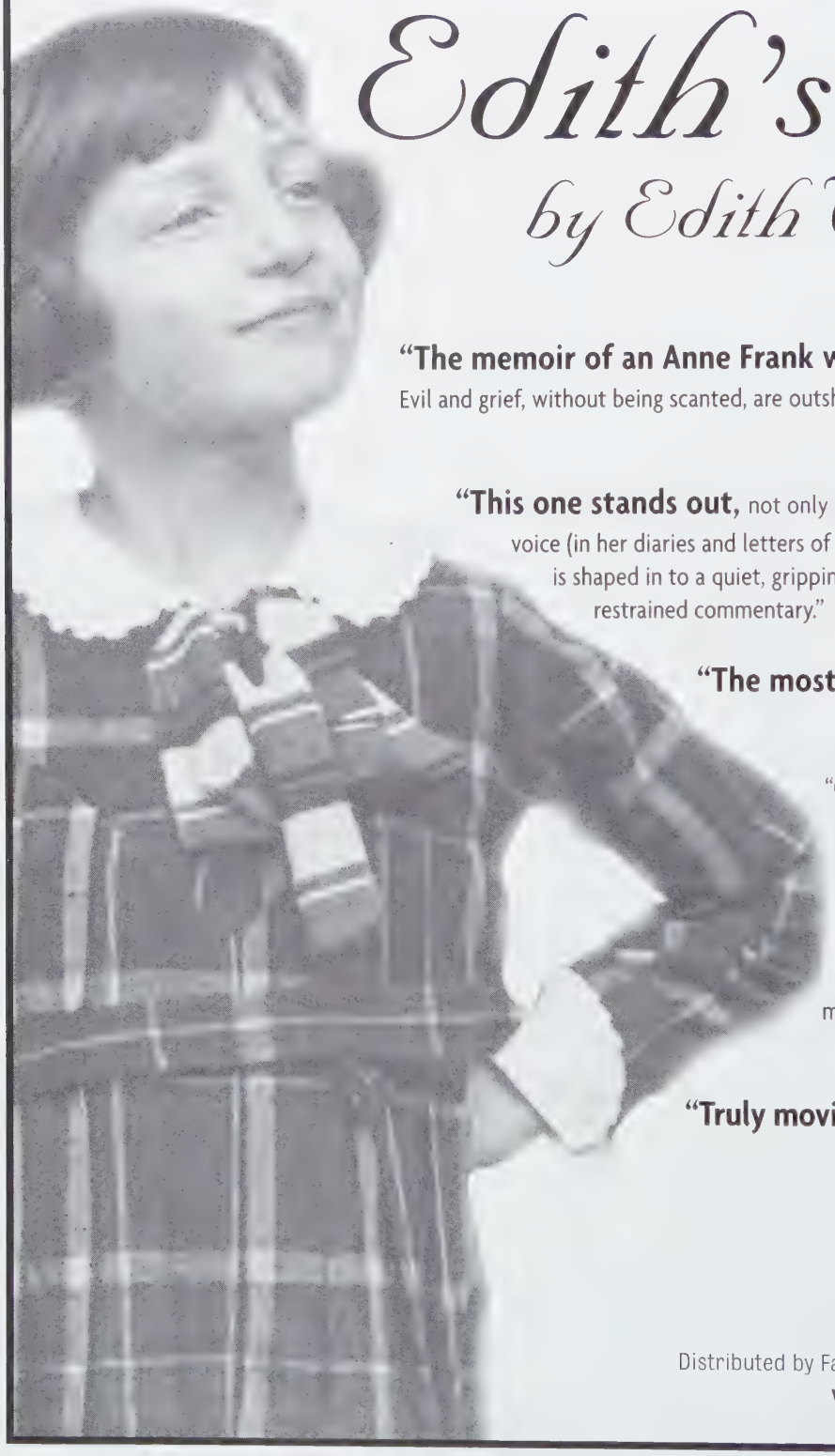

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y and when it comes time for me to get married, I won't be able to because everyone will think that I am a slut. When relatives come over, my mom hides the pictures of my boyfriend and me."

How much discrepancy is there between what you do and what you tell your parents that you do?

Mishana hid a boyfriend for two years from her parents. "They don't know anything about my social life. I make my own set of rules but they leave me no choice. I think they've raised me with enough morals to make my own decisions."

Shadi also hides many things from her parents including that she has had sex. Also, "I won't tell them I am interested in women. I won't tell them I have lesbian or gay friends, but I hide lesbian friends more because," she says sarcastically, "'you know they are all recruiters.'"

Rachel also lies. "I have lied to my parents so much that I can't even count. I do it not so I hurt them but so I don't hurt them. They don't want to know the truth. I've found out the hard way. Almost all of these lies deal with people of the opposite sex. Other than those issues, I am a really good daughter and have done everything they expect of me. That's why I almost can't wait till I get married so that they hopefully will accept everything about me and I won't have to hide anything from them."

Do you feel guilty, shameful, or resentful because of these lies?

"I resent the culture for putting this barrier between us," says Shadi. "If they saw me as a whole person, our relationship would be better and they would be much prouder of me, if they could move past their Persian cultural socialization. If I told them things like I was not a virgin or that I liked women, they would make me feel dirty. I don't have any shame about what I have done but I know if I told them they would shame me."

Rachel says she feels guilty constantly. Almost everything that involves her boyfriend is a lie. Her boyfriend and she must go over everything together to make sure that they have the same story. She spent two months contemplating whether or not she was going to have sex with her boyfriend. "I would lie awake at night every night, for hours, wondering if I could live my Persian life not being a virgin. I was wondering how I would keep it from my parents and what they would do if they found out. I finally decided that I was in love. I cared for this man and that I was going to live my life for myself. I resent the culture for making me doubt my decision. I resent my culture for making premarital sex taboo for women but praising men who have it. I resent my culture for making me feel like I am a second-class citizen and that I do not have desires like my brother does." ■

Pegah Hendizadeh Schiffman is a human resources consultant. She left Iran with her family during the Revolution and was raised in America.

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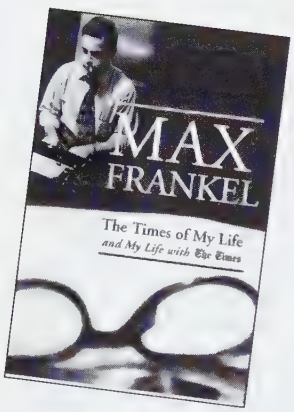


Max Frankel's new memoir, *The Times of My Life and My Life With The Times*, is a fascinating chronicle of the last four decades as seen by an astute journalist; it is also an account of Frankel's evolution from a 10-year-old German-Jewish refugee to, ultimately, a world-renowned columnist and editor. What interested me most, however, was his intermittent depiction of his troubled 26-year marriage to Tobia Brown Frankel, my classmate at Brooklyn's Midwood High School from 1948 to 1951 and editor of our high school newspaper.

Tobi, Max Frankel's wife, was increasingly depressed about her failure to launch her own career in journalism.

Both Tobi and I attended Ivy League women's colleges, earned M.A.s in teaching from Harvard and married bright, ambitious Jewish men whose professional lives left them little time for families. But there our paths diverged: I was fortunate, at the age of 41, to begin a satisfying career as an English professor. Tobi, however, was increasingly depressed about her failure to launch her own career in journalism. Over the years she held a variety of positions, finally enrolling in Columbia Law School at the age of 50. She died of a brain tumor before she finished her studies. Frankel, however, makes little connection in his book between Tobi's disappointments and her life with him.

THE FRANKEL FAMILY COLLECTION

Leaving for the "dark, Soviet side of the moon," 1957.

Frankel describes the three happy years he and Tobi spent on assignment in Moscow after they married. More adept at learning Russian than he, she befriended a number of Russians, and through them he was able to glimpse what life was like for ordinary citizens. In Moscow, he writes, she was "a full partner in the business of foreign correspondence," one whose observations enriched his own dispatches to the Times. Yet despite the harmonious beginning of their marriage, conflicts erupted after the Frankels had their first child and returned to the United States. Though he had warned her that as the wife of a news reporter she would have to move frequently and live "an unconventional life," Tobi was distressed by his frequent absences, by her domestic responsibilities, and by her own failure to establish a career while their three children were growing up. She did find part-time work as a history teacher and as an editor of the National Jewish Monthly; she also wrote a book for young people on Russian art. However, what she really wanted was a career in journalism, and she berated Frankel repeatedly for not securing a position for her at the Times. That he failed to do so is not surprising, given the rules about nepotism and the few positions open to women at the time. As Frankel himself acknowledges, the dearth of women at the Times resulted in a successful class-action suit against the newspaper in 1977, when he was editorial page editor.

As a wife, Tobi was hardly a Vera Nabokov whose self-abnegating devotion to her husband's career as his typist, business manager, letter-writer and muse is described by Stacy Schiff in her new book, *Vera (Mrs. Vladimir Nabokov): Portrait of a Marriage*. Frankel credits Tobi with articulating early on many of the concerns that would be voiced by other women in the following decades, but he also deeply resented what he terms her "harsh" confrontational style.

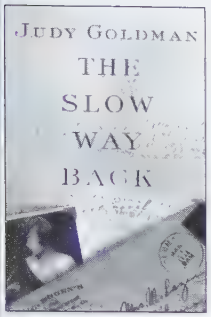
From what Frankel calls the "many tearful monologues" he found written by her on undated scraps of paper, he quotes the following: "In every job I was unhappy, lusting after more—more prestige, more power, more position....Success is what I want in any form!"

Frankel did include in his memoir some discussion of his troubled marriage. What disturbs me most about his account, however, is that ultimately he invokes the discourse of psychiatry rather than the discourse of feminism to explain his wife's recurring episodes of depression. He fails to emphasize that depression was all too common among the thwarted women of his wife's generation. Frankel observes about his wife that antidepressants at last "kept her mercifully balanced," making her more "loving and lovable" to her family. "Tobi's chemistry," he concludes, "was for too long her destiny."

We know, from a variety of disciplinary perspectives about women's lives, their sense of entrapment and the social causes of their depression. I wonder what account Tobi Frankel would have given of her own life had she herself written this memoir.

Charlotte Margolis Goodman is a professor of English at Skidmore College.

Southern Debuts



The Slow Way Back

by Judy Goldman
William Morrow & Company, Inc., $24

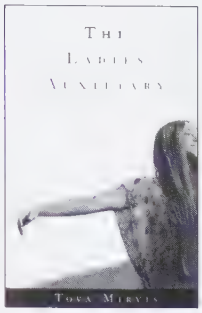
In her first novel, *The Slow Way Back*, Judy Goldman addresses the burden of family secrets, the irreversible bond between sisters, and the development of Jewish identity in the American South. Goldman lovingly portrays the intimacy among three sets of sisters in three generations as they struggle over survival, pride, responsibility and privacy.

Her story begins when Thea receives an unexpected package of letters her grandmother wrote to her own sister in the early part of the century. Thea finds an older woman, the only person in her South Carolina town who speaks Yiddish, to translate them. As each newly-translated letter arrives, Thea delves deeper into her past, looking at her choices in light of past generations'.

Goldman bravely attempts new territory in this novel. Though Jewish women in the South have long been neglected in history and literature, Goldman resurrects several generations of Southern Jewish women and lets them speak. Spouses, both Jewish and non-Jewish, occupy an important place in this exchange as well. In giving these women this opportunity to speak, Goldman satisfies both sides of the supply and demand equation: the more we hear, the more we want to hear. Her characters seem to know, intuitively, that the life work they are doing (both in letters and in conversation) is significant outside of the realm of their small family.

Part of this novel's sophistication is its delicate suggestion of conscious and subconscious parallels throughout generations. Goldman pursues questions of what is known, by whom, and how, and concludes that bonds of blood can prove more adhesive than any other. Questions, however, persist. One wonders why certain characters are left silent and why certain topics, though introduced, are not pursued. For instance, the death of Thea's only sister, Mickey, from cancer fails to elicit the kind of response from Thea that one might expect and does not satisfy the author's earlier standards for characters' self-expression. These narrative bumps only emphasize the very serious challenges Goldman is approaching in this novel.

—Sarah Ann Minkin



The Ladies Auxiliary

by Tova Mirvis
W.W. Norton & Co., $23.95

If you moved into the Memphis Jewish community of Tova Mirvis' *The Ladies Auxiliary* even moments before Shabbat, chances are one of the women in the community would come knocking—both to welcome you and to find out who you are. By the time you had your bearings, they'd already have found you a place in their carpool, made your child at home in their family and figured out where you'd come from, why you'd moved to Memphis and who your family was.

The women of Memphis' Orthodox Jewish community, who narrate Mirvis' novel in the collective "we," consider their hometown "the Jerusalem of the South," their families "part of a chain of Jewish Memphians that would extend into the future forever, as long and as far away as God in Heaven." Watching over the community, their voice is stern but loving—and very distrustful of change.

Into this community enters Batsheva, a convert who has moved from New York with her young daughter after the death of her Memphis-born husband. Initially suspicious of Batsheva (she wears unfamiliar clothing and sings out loud in *shul*), the community begins to accept her and finds that her spiritual nature reinvigorates their lives and practices. But when the high-school girls begin turning to Batsheva for advice on the "outside world" and the rabbi's son, after spending time with her, decides not to return to yeshiva, the women of The Ladies Auxiliary snap to attention and try to regain control over their community and their way of life.

Mirvis, in her first novel, gives us a touching portrayal of the conflict between community interest and individual desire, between a traditional circumscribed way of life and a personal, spiritual connection to Judaism. While the women often look close-minded, there is something touching about what they are trying to preserve: a community where consistency is honored and where people can speak in one voice. In the prologue, the community reflects on the changes that followed Batsheva's arrival and reminds us, "at the time, all we could see was that we were losing our children. And so what else was there to do?"

—Natalie Blitt

Slice of History

The very first issue of the journal of the Southern Jewish Historical Society, Southern Jewish History, contains some fascinating bits of Jewish women's history. Among the six pieces are a profile of "Jewish Nursing Pioneers" Amelia Greenwald and Regina Kaplan. Author Susan Mayer, an assistant professor of nursing, explores the reasons these two women from middle-class German-Jewish families bucked social norms to work in a field that overtly discriminated against Jews and other minorities. Also included is "Ruth and Rosalie: Two Tales of Jewish New Orleans," a memoir by Bobbie Malone, of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. She tells the story of two women born in the early years of this century who went on to become leaders of the New Orleans Jewish community: Ruth Dreyfous, from a prominent, prosperous family that prided itself on its secular orientation and membership in local Yacht and Harmony clubs; and Rosalie Cohen, from an Eastern European family steeped in Orthodoxy and yet devoted to their daughter's Jewish education. For copies or membership: Southern Jewish Historical Society PO Box 5024 Atlanta, GA 30302.

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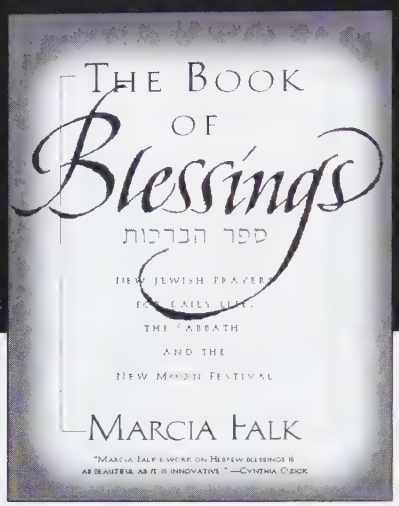

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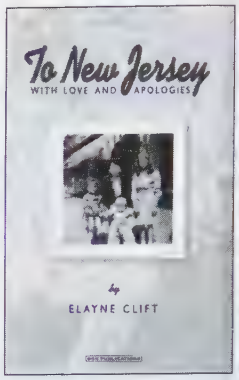
To New Jersey With Love and Apologies



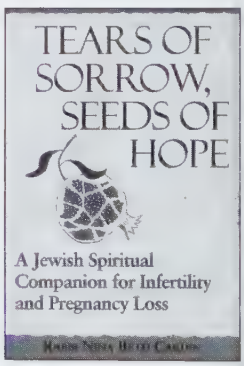
by Elayne Clift
OGN Publications (P.O.B. 299, Saxtons River, VT 05154), $14.95 paperback

Elayne Clift's latest collection proves that we can go home again, at least in our own minds. A memoir comprising short vignettes and poems, *To New Jersey* ... covers territory well-trod in Jewish women's memoirs: living as a Jew in a *goyish* town; dealing with chronic mental illness; coming to terms with loss; choosing which traditionally female constraints to toss aside and which to keep; and understanding the class antagonisms, racism and sexual politics of the 1940s and 1950s.

Clift's writing is often witty and humorous, capturing the nuances of small-town life. Episodes are vividly rendered: visiting her depressed mother in a chaotic psychiatric hospital; gaining a toehold on independence via babysitting; deciphering an ongoing battle between a "greenhorn" *zayde* and modern relatives; enduring the annual roadtrip to see family in Canada. While the anthology is rife with tragedy, Clift does not wallow in sadness; instead, she offers an even-handed and surprisingly affectionate look at a lonely, complicated coming-of-age. It deserves a central spot among the many feminist memoirs of the past few decades.

—Eleanor J. Bader

Tears of Sorrow, Seeds of Hope: A Jewish Spiritual Companion for Infertility and Pregnancy Loss



by Nina Beth Cardin
Jewish Lights Publishing, $19.95

Sitting in *Kol Nidre* services, pounding my chest for repentance during the *Al Het* prayer, I was struck by the power of the words and I understood, for the first time, how the prayer held personal meaning for me. I had left the house an hour earlier, after having shortchanged my four-year-old son in a game of Chutes and Ladders, promising to finish when I returned but knowing that he would be fast asleep and that the game would never be completed. I understood, at that moment, how great a sin I had committed in making a false promise to my child. I was amazed that after so many years of intoning the same words, they could finally come alive for me as a result of such a banal occurrence.

This was a revelation. Prayers, especially communal prayers, were not a large part of my life until 18 months ago, when my second child, my five-day-old son, died after a complicated pregnancy. For months during the pregnancy, while I was on bedrest in the hospital, many at my synagogue said the *mi sheberach*, the Jewish prayer for healing, for me and my family. While I was not actually present, it was my first real personal experience with prayer. And when Ari died, although it is not required by Jewish law for a child so young, my husband and I said *kaddish* for a year. Although I did not understand the words well, they acted as a talisman for me,

providing comfort on a regular basis. I knew that at the same time, every week, there would be a small portion of a day when I could openly mourn and then, afterwards, feel surprisingly refreshed. Equally powerful for me was that I knew others were quietly mourning with me. Through my grief, I opened myself to prayer and ritual, which led me through a difficult but solid healing process.

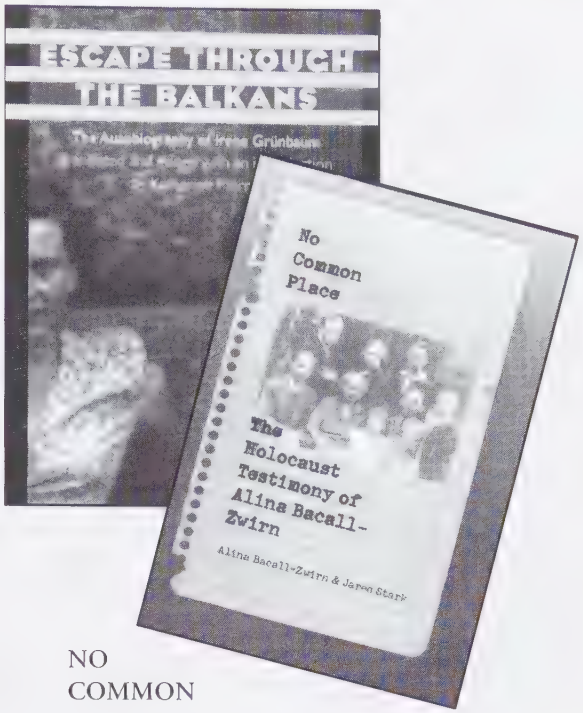
Nina Beth Cardin has composed a small, important book, *Tears of Sorrow, Seeds of Hope: A Jewish Spiritual Companion for Infertility and Pregnancy Loss*. Her own experiences with two miscarriages 20 years ago were a startling lesson in how unprepared the Jewish community has been to deal with this type of loss. But she has been struck over the years by how much Jewish prayer and liturgy has the potential to offer comfort and solace for these very losses. Her book offers an amalgam of both traditional prayers and contemporary poems and rituals to help guide the individual or family experiencing such loss.

> "The loss drains us. We are spent....We no longer breathe the same air as everyone else. The world belongs to them, not us. Joy is drained from our bodies. We cry until we can cry no more. We are angry, at ourselves, our spouses, life, doctors, medicine, God, all pregnant women, happy mothers.
>
> Over time, our anger abates, but our sadness remains, each of us sorrowing in our own way."
>
> —from *Tears of Sorrow, Seeds of Hope*

While there are a number of books about death and the grieving process on the bookshelves today, few if any offer the almost workbook-like approach to ritual that Cardin's book does, and none of the books about the Jewish "way" of mourning have taken this route. Cardin has compiled prayers, meditations and rituals for every step of the grieving process, and for every type of loss associated with potential motherhood. I was most struck by the many prayers she has found for continuing to love and honor your mate—one of the hardest things to remember to do when consumed by grief, but also one of the most grounding and important. There is a prayer for the ritual of attending the *mikveh* after a miscarriage or a stillbirth, prayers for fertility, prayers for ending a pregnancy due to medical necessity, prayers for delivery and prayers for Friday night. Cardin makes the reader realize that even in our darkest hours, our lives can be infused with thankfulness, prayerfulness and ritual, and offers a roadmap for making it so.

Cardin reminds us that the matriarchs, Sarah, Rebecca, Leah and Rachel, could not conceive and carried in pain, but eventually bore the children who brought forth a great nation. She tells us again about Hannah, whose petitions for a child are considered emblematic of rabbinic prayer and whose son, Samuel, would anoint the first king of Israel. These are women who cried bitterly over their infertility. Today, we call them mothers. Through their stories and the prayers that swirl around them, we are reminded of the journey of motherhood—fragmented and imperfect though it may be. Nina Beth Cardin implores us to make use of their stories, to open ourselves up to their poetry, songs and prayers and use them to craft our own personal journey of healing. —*Karen Paul-Stern*

***Sarah Ann Minkin**, who lives in Haifa, is working on a research project about Southern Jewish women and welfare history; **Natalie Blitt** is a writer in New York City; **Eleanor Bader** is a writer and teacher in Brooklyn, NY; **Karen Paul-Stern** is a writer in Maryland.*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sara shandler speaks

continued from page 29

"This is the first time I've ever told anyone this."

shandler: Yeah, exactly. There were times when I thought, I am not a psychologist and I am not equipped to know these things about these people who I don't know.

blustain: Do you feel exposed, having written so much about yourself?

shandler: Sure. It was really a decision I made. It was, like, I'm really not going to hold anything back for this because it's important for it to come from me, because I look normal and happy and it's important for me to really 'fess up to all of this. So that was definitely a real deliberate decision, but there were many, many times when I was sitting at a computer and just said, *okay*, deep breath, *I'm just going to do it.* And just write. Admitting how old I was the first time I had sex and knowing

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ny grandparents were going to read it vas, like, *Oh, God.*

blustain: How many of these issues did ou see during your years in B'nai B'rith Girls?

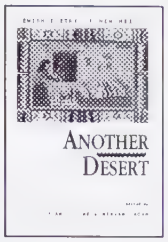
shandler: What I saw over my time at BBYO was that a lot of girls were really catty, really hurt each other, there were a significant number of eating disorders. Girls just really didn't feel satisfied with themselves, they were really only interested in seeing themselves the way that boys saw them. [As a leader] I was really interested in trying to find some other way for these girls, and giving them information, and wanting to be a different kind of role model for them.

blustain: A lot of what you write about is girls and pathologies—abusing alcohol and drugs, cutting themselves, having eating disorders, staying in abusive relationships. Is that level of dysfunction "normal"?

shandler: I think that in some ways that's normal adolescence, which is what is really sad. I don't think the "normal teenager," with teenage angst—you know, "I hate my parents, and they won't let me go out and play"—is what's happening for most girls. For most girls, I think there's something more serious. It may not be an eating disorder that is even close to being hospitalized, but a 13-year-old girl who is eating diet pills all the time, that's a problem, and that's not normal. I remember being in sixth grade and deciding with my friend that we were going to eat salads every day, and we had to be on the diet. Eleven years old. That is normal, but it shouldn't be normal.

jaffe: I remember when I was 14, I had the exact same thing for lunch every day. I had a fat-free yogurt, four fat-free Fig Newtons, and a banana. It was perfectly balanced, because I was, like, 'Whatever's in Glamour.'

shandler: Magazines just don't want to take responsibility that they are putting these ideas out there for girls. If they admitted that, they'd have to seriously look at what they were publishing. ■



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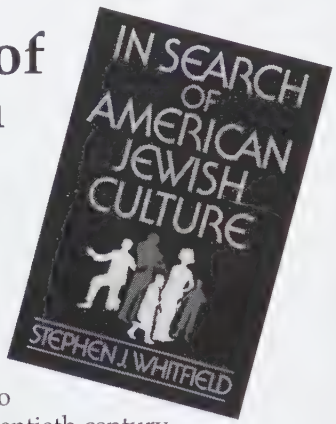
In Search of American Jewish Culture

STEPHEN J. WHITFIELD



JEWS have contributed to American culture in the twentieth century to a degree out of all proportion to their numbers. But when Irving Berlin writes "White Christmas" and "Easter Parade," when Leonard Bernstein composes a celebrated "mass," or when Al Jolson, the cantor's son, performs in blackface, can these be considered manifestations of a specifically Jewish American culture? Stephen J. Whitfield, a cultural historian at Brandeis and author of *The Culture of the Cold War*, says yes, and he offers a lively, wide-ranging, critical interpretation of that tradition in his latest book.

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The Kiev Connection

continued from page 11

decided to return to her small city of Vinnitsa, where there are about 180 Jews, to try to start a Jewish women's organization. Soon the group realized that if they wanted to accomplish all their dreams, they would need to join with non-Jewish women, too.

There are now some 40 women members of Action, the women's organization they created. Action has held sex-education seminars, and has taken the first steps in starting a leadership-training school for teen girls. With one computer, they set up a computer-training center for women.

To spur the mayor to turn the heat on in a city kindergarten, Slabodyanik employed techniques she'd learned from Kesher. Action sent out postcards to all the women who occupied important positions in their city—bank directors, business owners—and they told them: "If you're not indifferent to the future of our city, and the future of your children, come visit us." When they came, some 20 at a time, they talked about their families and what they liked to do with their friends. They discussed what they liked to cook, and they made arts and crafts boxes together. They were willing to be "as female as they needed to be" in order to form the bonds of community. Then they discussed the elections.

When the elections came around, two months later, these powerful women told their subordinates to go out and vote. Sixteen members sit on the council. Before the last elections, only one of them was a woman. Now there are seven.

Saturday, during morning services, I have an epiphany, about women, Judaism, social activism and Project Kesher's philosophy of creating leaders.

Five years ago, in Cherkassy, where Nina Klotsman is from, a family moved into a house and found a Torah scroll in the attic. It was missing a large section of text, had only one handle, and no covering. But the community used it anyway, because it was the only scroll they had.

Klotsman runs the women's organization in Cherkassy, a community of about 4,000 Jews. Her group is strong in part because Klotsman is strong. In April, Klotsman attended a conference of Jewish organizations in Ukraine as the representative of the women's group in her town. When she arrived she noticed that out of the 1500 people in the room, 60%-70% of them were women, but of the 30 people who were heading the conference, not one of them was a woman. She went to one of the organizers and she asked him, "Why are there no women at the top when there are so many women activists?" He said they hadn't thought of it, and they appointed three women to sit on the board.

Klotsman attended her first Project Kesher conference in 1996. Last summer, during another seminar, held in Cherkassy, Klotsman told some of the American women about the scroll, and they offered to bring it to the U.S. and fix it for her. It snuck through customs in a knapsack, sat in an airport locker in Amsterdam for a few days, and finally made it safely to the U.S.

Saturday morning during Shabbat services at the conference, the scroll was returned, with the inscription, "To the holy Jewish community of Cherkassy, from your friends around the world." Eva Sandler, a teenage New Yorker, had donated the cost of the restoration on the occasion of her bat mitzvah. Eva's mother, activist philanthropist Sheri Sandler, had introduced her daughter to Kesher on an earlier mission to Ukraine.

We stood in a circle and passed the Torah from one woman to another. When they held it, the women looked like they were cradling a baby. As we passed the scroll around, I thought, *If we weren't Jewish, none of us in this room would have met each other, or felt responsibility for each other. If we weren't women, we wouldn't be working toward common goals.*

The Jewish women of Project Kesher had found support in being Jews. And they had taken that strength and moved out from it, to expand their community, to reach out to non-Jewish women, to embrace social action in the universal.

Finally the scroll arrived at Klotsman. She stood at the front of the room as several women covered her with their *tallitot*. We sang *shehecheyanu*, the blessing of new beginnings. Then we sang *Sh'ma*, a prayer of unity. She cried, and so did we. ■

Rachel Blustain is co-editor of the magazine Foster Care Youth United.

FAITH

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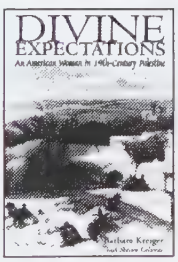

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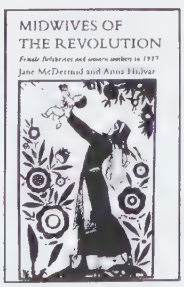

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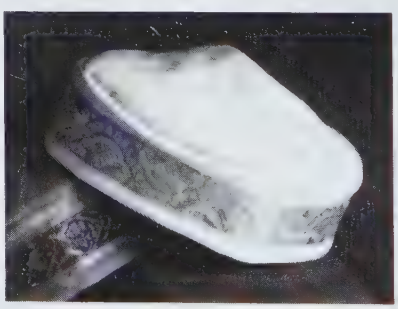

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Taking Care

continued from page 17

From Memory to Transformation: Jewish Women's Voices

by Sarah Silberstein Swartz & Margie Wolfe (Second Story Press, $18.95)
This wide-ranging anthology by activists, rabbis, scholars and artists includes Pearl Goldberg's "Minyan of Crones: New Rituals for Jewish Women." The article describes some of the ritual efforts of one women's group, the eponymous Minyan of Crones, to participate more fully in the Jewish tradition.

Am I Old Yet?: The Story of Two Women, Generations Apart, Growing Up and Growing Young in a Timeless Friendship

by Leah Komaiko (Golden Books, $20)
What begins as a one-hour weekly volunteer visit between a 44-year-old woman (the author) and a 94-year-old woman in a nursing home turns into a moving memoir of a relationship that explored issues of aging, death, sex and more. In the process, Komaiko is released from some of her deep anxiety about aging.

Parting Company: Understanding the Loss of a Loved One

by Cynthia Pearson & Margaret L. Stubbs (Seal Press, $18.95)
Fourteen first-hand narratives from caregivers reflect on their experiences of loss as their loved ones die. This book also includes accounts from professionals who care for the dying.

Another Country: Navigating the Emotional Terrain of Our Elders

by Mary Pipher (Riverhead Books, $24.95)
Pipher revolutionized the way we look at girls' development in her book *Reviving Ophelia.* Now she offers her insights on another difficult life-passage, the journey to old age. Acknowledging the difficulty of the most basic communication when it comes to aging, she guides readers into a new language for understanding our elders. ■

Digital collages by Laurie Douglas include the following images: Photos on pages 12-15 by Layle Silbert, New York, New York; photo on pages 16-17 courtesy of The Hebrew Home for the Aged at Riverdale. Map images on pages 12-17 from Photodisc, Inc.

Songs & Prayers

Counting Angels in the Wilderness, Geela Rayzel Raphael, Juliet Irene Spitzer, and Margot Stein sing original songs about biblical women—Ruth, Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah; holidays, ritual occasions and more. Cassette $12, CD $16, plus $1 shipping, from *MIRAJ, 166 E. Levering Mill Rd. #240, Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004; Phone*

orders to Sounds Write Productions, 1-800-9-SOUND-9. For concerts/programs call (610)771-0831.

"Praise the world/ praise its fullness/ and its longing/ its beauty and its grief." Marcia Falk's *Book of Blessings: New Jewish Prayers for Daily Life, the Sabbath, and the New Moon Festival,* written in English and Hebrew, gender-inclusive and non-patriarchal, is available to congregations at quantity discount of 50%-60%. Paperback: *Kristin Woodcock, Beacon Press, 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108-2892; (617)742-2110 x573; fax (617)742-2290; kwoodcock@beacon.org.* Hardcover: *Stacey Horne, HarperCollins, 10 E. 53rd St., New York, NY 10022; (212)207-7945; fax (212)207-7222; stacy.horne@harpercollins.com.* Also visit Falk's web site: *www.interbridge.com/marciafalk*

Health News

Breast Health; The Weight of Eating Disorders; Women's Health After Menopause are recent themes of the bimonthly National Women's Health Report. Receive it as a member ($25 annually) of the National Women's Health Resource Center, a not-for-profit clearinghouse. *NWHRC, 120 Albany St., #820, New Brunswick, NJ 08901; 877-98-NWHRC; www.healthywomen.org*

Helping End Eating Disorders. Twelve million are afflicted with eating disorders in the US. This non-profit organization is planning to build a halfway house on Long Island for patients leaving the hospital but needing more intensive care than an outpatient program. *HEED, 9620 Church St., Brooklyn, NY 11212; (718)240-6451; fax (516)935-7952; www.eatingdis.com*

H·E·E·D
Eating Disorders Program

"Parental contact" laws restricting abortion have been passed in 42 states and are in effect in 30. Experts say that for teens who feel they cannot tell their parents they are pregnant, these laws do not improve family communication. Judicial bypass permits a judge to determine if a young woman is mature enough (or if it would be in her best interest) to obtain an abortion without telling her parents. Learn more in the free monthly "Reproductive Freedom News." *The Center for Reproductive Law & Policy, 120 Wall St., New York, NY 10005; (212)514-5534; fax (212)514-5538; info@crlp.org; www.crlp.org*

Lesbian Women with Breast Cancer can join a support group sensitive to the special needs of a population that often does not receive adequate care. The New York program is a joint effort of a gay women's health practice and Beth Israel Hospital Cancer Center. *Cindy Turkeltaub, (212)844-6022.*

Organize a mother/daughter sports night at your school or JCC—and learn about Canadian **Bobbie Rosenfeld** (1903-1969), Olympic gold medalist and popular sportswriter. Monitor your area's politicians on women's rights, civil rights and the environment, causes dear to the first Jewish woman elected to Congress, **Bella Abzug** (1920-1998). Talk to seniors in your community, inspired by the book/film *Number Our Days,* about the lives of elderly Jews in Los Angeles by anthropologist and filmmaker **Barbara Myerhoff** (1935-1985). Free posters and resource guide for Jewish Women's History Month (March): *Leslie Mirchin, Jewish Women's Archives, 68 Harvard St., Brookline, MA 02445; (617)232-2258; fax (617)975-0109; lmirchin@aol.com;www.jwa.org*

Girls

The Peace Maker Training Institute offers people ages 17-25 a chance to explore nonviolence, multiculturalism, racial and social justice, gender issues, gun violence, and gay and lesbian rights. Learn leadership strategies, group facilitation, publicity, event planning, public speaking. *Peacemaker Training Institute, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960; (914)358-4601; fax (914)358-4924; forpti@igc.org; www.nonviolence.org/for*

The Center for Ventures in Girls' Education offers organizations girl-centered programs and trains adults who work with girls, to counteract the disadvantages that exist for girls in co-ed settings. "The Leader Reader: A Girl's Guide to Making Things Happen" is their manual. *The Center for Ventures in Girls' Education, 160 Grove St. Wellesley, MA 02481; (781)237-3358; fax (781)237-3371.*

The Girls Report: What We Know & Need to Know About Growing Up Female, written by Lynn Phillips for the National Council for Research on Women, gives the most recent findings on research, policy analysis, advocacy and innovative programs on behalf of women and girls. (It is a sequel to the 1991 study: "Risk, Resiliency, and Resistance: Current Research on Adolescent Girls.") The 120-page publication includes a bibliography and resource guide. $20 from *NCRW, 11 Hanover Sq., New York, NY 10005; (212)785-7735; fax (212)785-7350; ncrw@ncrw.org*

Searching For...

US Women's Movement Directory—at last—will provide information on activists from the years 1963-1973. It will include biographic information and first-hand accounts of who, what, where and when. Send info to: *Barbara Love, 43 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10003; (212)627 2146; jlove@msn.com*

Women spies, resistance and combat fighters, pilots, scientists and journalists who served in these roles during World War II can tell their stories to documentary filmmaker *Kathy Conkwright (615)386-3668; conkwright@earthlink.net*

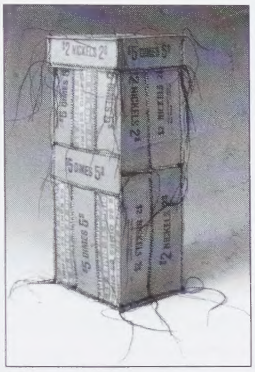
Voices from the Well: Miriam and the Women of Exodus. For an anthology send your poems, midrash, textual analysis or essay about Miriam, Yocheved, Bat Pharoh, Shifrah, Puah or Zipporah: *Rikudei Mririam Press, 2521 Valleywood Dr., San Brunio, CA 94066; (650)568-7929; RivkahS@aol.com*

Community Work & Family: Voices, Current Issues and Controversies would like to publish voices traditionally left out of academic journals. Submissions may include drawings and poetry. *Michele Moore, Dept. of Educational Studies, University of Sheffield, 388 Glossop Rd., Sheffield S10 2JA, United Kingdom.*

Rain and Thunder: A Radical Feminist Journal of Discussion and Activism seeks writing from radical feminist perspectives including theory, opinion, strategy, action updates, news, reviews, and upcoming events, artwork. A one-year subscription costs $1 for every $1000 of your income. *Rain and Thunder, P.O.B. 813, Northampton, MA 01061; rainandthunder@yahoo.com*

Exhibits

Making Change: 100 Artists Interpret the Tzedaka Box inspiring viewers to give away money regularly. Through January



DON FELTON

Lisa Kokin, *Strings Attached*, 1999

23 at *The Jewish Museum of San Francisco, 166 Geary St. #1500, San Franciso, CA 94108; (415)788-9990; fax (415)788-9050; www.jewsh museumsf.org*

Eve's Vocabulary: Paintings by Deborah Rosenthal interpret woman's identity, female shape, creativity and muse on the "first woman" of the Bible. Dec. 10 thru April 10. *Philadelphia Museum of Jewish Art , Congregation Rodeph Shalom, 615 N. Broad Ave., Philadelphia, PA; (215)627-6747.*

ALLAN FINKELMAN

Deborah Rosenthal, *The Righteous Person Flourishes as the Palm*, 1999.

Women Beyond Borders is a traveling exhibit of the work of 500 women artists from around the world who created art out of miniature wooden boxes at the invitation of Californians Lorraine Serena and Elena Siff. *Women Beyond Borders, P.O. Box 1315, Carpinteria, CA 93014; www.womenbeyond borders.org*

Attend

Social Change and the Evolving Nature of Jewish Law: Tensions, Contradictions and Accomodations is the conference on feminism and Orthodoxy, February 20-21 in New York City. *JOFA, 459 Columbus Ave. #329; New York, NY 10024; (888)550-JOFA; jofa@rcn.com*

The Jewish Superwoman: A Woman of Two Realms, a national collegiate Jewish women's conference will take place March 10-12. Contact: *Erica Michelstein or Rebecca Rakow, c/o Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel, 52 Mt. Auburn St., Cambridge, MA 02138; (617)495-4696; emichels@fas.harvard. edu or rakow@fas.harvard.edu*

Unmasking Esther, a new feminist Purim celebration is planned for March 19 in New York City. Call *Lois Stogel (914)949-4717 x114.*

Kol Isha, an international summer seminar brings to Jerusalem 25 Jewish women (ages 18-25) interested in setting new visions for their communities. Explore the status of women in Judaism, Israeli and Diaspora politics, the peace process, and tour with peers. *World Union of Jewish Students; (972)2-561-0133; wujs@netvision.net.il*

Tzedaka

Beit New York-Jerusalem finds volunteer opportunities for visitors from the New York area to Jerusalem, assists tourists, and arranges home hospitality. Drop in: *Beit New York, Safra Sq., Bldg #10, enter on Tzahal Sq.* or write to *BNYJ, Partnership 2000 Jerusalem-NY, Jewish Agency, Israel Dept., 9100 Jerusalem, Israel; (972)2-624-3451/4681; fax (972)624-4682; cindyb@jazo.org.il.* New York contact: *Volunteer Alliance/Sol Goldman Y, (212)780-0800 x281; volunteer@edalliance.org*

The Hunger Site. Click a button and somewhere in the world a hungry person gets a meal, contributed—at no cost to you—by the site's corporate sponsors. *www.thehungersite.com*

Help Earthquake Victims in Turkey via *American Jewish World Service, 989 Ave. of the Americas, 10th fl, New York, NY 10018; (800)889-7146; fax (212)736-3463; or American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 711 Third Ave., New York, NY 10017; (212)687-6200; fax (212)370-5467.*

—compiled by Naomi Danis

When you help these other worthy organizations, please consider a tax-deductible contribution to LILITH, a crucial vehicle of communication and connection for Jewish women. Mail a contribution to LILITH, 250 W. 57th St. #2432, New York, NY 10107; Call 1-888-2-LILITH or fax 212-757-5705 to contribute by credit card. Thank you!

Ma

by Alison Seevak

If you look good, you feel good.

Be nice to your father, he only wants attention.

Men are like babies, you just have to humor them.

Some things you have to grit your teeth and bear, like high heels and male gynecologists.

Don't walk like a duck

point your toes straight ahead.

Practice holding your stomach in, eventually it becomes automatic.

I told your sister if she stopped biting her nails, I'd buy her a ruby ring.

You can build an entire wardrobe around black and white.

If you look good, you feel good

Marry a Jewish boy, he'll get you a maid

The glass is either half-empty or half-full.

If you see something you like when you're shopping, buy it in more than one color.

Stop twiddling your hair.

Take your elbows off the table.

Stand up straight, you're slouching.

You're eating another one of those?

If I were you, I'd go to law school, then you'd really have a profession to fall back on.

I told your sister if she stopped biting her nails, I'd buy her a ruby ring.

You have good nails like me, your sister's are stubby like your father

Don't worry, anyone can get married.

If all your clothes are black and white, it's easy to mix and match.

You don't have to stand in front of the closet in the mornings, wondering what to put on.

My mother said if I married your father, I'd end up scrubbing floors. She said my sister would be waltzing down Park Avenue wearing a mink.

Stand up straight.

Take your fingers out of your mouth.

Don't eat another one of those.

Men are like babies, you just have to humor them

Be nice to your father, he only wants attention.

If I were you, I'd go to law school, that way you'll always be able to take care of yourself

Who ate all the Oreos?

Hold your stomach in long enough, pretty soon you won't even feel it.

Point your toes straight ahead, don't walk like a duck.

Black is always slimming.

You can build an entire wardrobe around black and white.

If you look good, you feel good

Alison Seevak is a poet and teacher living in the San Francisco Bay Area.